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What went wrong?

John Milbank roots the global crisis in Europe's retreat from Christianity

Daniel Philpott maps out a Muslim pathway to religious tolerance • **Charlie McCann** asks if women's brains are different

Melanie McDonagh rebukes Cambridge's cowardly dons • **Jon M. Sweeney** interviews Richard Rohr

Clare Carlisle is moved by Kierkegaard's philosophy of the heart • **Frank Cottrell Boyce** finds hope and blessings in The Waste Land

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**BREXIT AND
DEMOCRACY**

MPs MUST NOT JUST TOE THE LINE

One of the fundamental principles of parliamentary democracy, that members of parliament have the right to vote according to their conscience, was vindicated in the House of Commons on Monday. A group of 32 Conservative MPs defied the party whip to approve a resolution, which was carried by 27 votes, that took command of parliamentary time away from the Government and handed it to MPs themselves. It means they can start to control Government policy on how the United Kingdom leaves the European Union, or even whether it does so at all. The principle says MPs should not be slaves to party policy nor to government dictation, nor be obliged to follow blindly some past public vote such as in a general election or a referendum. They must each be free to weigh up the issues as their conscience dictates.

One of the most disturbing aspects of the Brexit debate is the extent to which this principle has been lost sight of. It is frequently argued, not least by the prime minister, that MPs have a solemn obligation to comply with the result of the 2016 referendum in favour of leaving the European Union – irrespective of whether they agree with it, or approve of the particular way the Government is trying to implement that decision. And they are also told they are obliged to stick to the promises made in party political manifestos in the 2017 general election to accept the 2016 result. Indeed, they are told that the public would lose all confidence in democratic politics if they failed to do so.

The opposite should be the case. The freedom of

MPs to vote according to their own prudent judgement is a cornerstone of the parliamentary process. It was set out by Edmund Burke in 1774 in an address to the electors of Bristol, his parliamentary constituency, after he had been rebuked for failing to vote the way they wanted him to. He told them he had a duty to serve them in every way he could, save that “his unbiased opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living ... They are a trust from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable. Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.” So it is not his disregard of some supposed mandate that is a betrayal of the electorate, but a failure to follow his conscience.

Burke was one of the founders of modern Conservatism, yet surprisingly little has been heard from that direction in support of this principle. Its opposite is the “mandate” theory, that MPs are elected simply to obey the instructions of the electorate, or the official policies of the party they belong to, or, in the case of a Catholic MP, some teaching or policy emanating from Rome. It is unworkable, because at any moment MPs may be faced with unforeseen circumstances, and virtually every choice will involve weighing up conflicting arguments. As Burke stated, it is the personal values and character of MPs that matter, and their willingness to be true to them, not their submission to a majority vote or party line.

**TRUMP AND THE
MUELLER REPORT**

NOT GUILTY, BUT FAR FROM BLAMELESS

A “unicorn” is a graphic expression that Brexit has added to the political lexicon, referring to a mythical entity that does not exist except in the wishful thinking of partisan politicians and their media allies. It could usefully be applied in Washington DC, to make sense of the widespread political and media theory that Donald Trump could only have won the presidency with secret help from Russia.

The report by the special investigator Robert Mueller has killed off this particular unicorn. In so doing, he has reset the political agenda. There is no impeachment process available that will supply a short cut to ending the Trump presidency. If the Democrats wish to displace him from the White House in two years, they will have to win the political argument, with a credible leader and programme. Hillary Clinton relied too much on the goodwill left over from her husband’s eight years in office, and on an agenda that took for granted a slate of liberal assumptions that many ordinary Americans did not find acceptable.

The likelihood of collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia ever being proved was always a remote possibility. What the Mueller investigation has shown, however, is that Mr Trump had surrounded himself with dubious characters, seven of whom have been convicted of criminal offences. These convictions, and a score or more of other outstanding indictments, would probably never have occurred otherwise. Mr Trump’s famous boast that he will “clean up the swamp” in Washington has ironically

been fulfilled in the way he would least have wished for.

Apart from the urgent need for Washington politicians to shift their focus towards the issues which most Americans really care about, the other serious lesson from this affair is the need to protect democratic politics from outside meddling via the internet, especially through the clandestine misuse of social media. This is not purely an American issue, and it casts a shadow over Brexit and several other political outcomes in Europe and elsewhere.

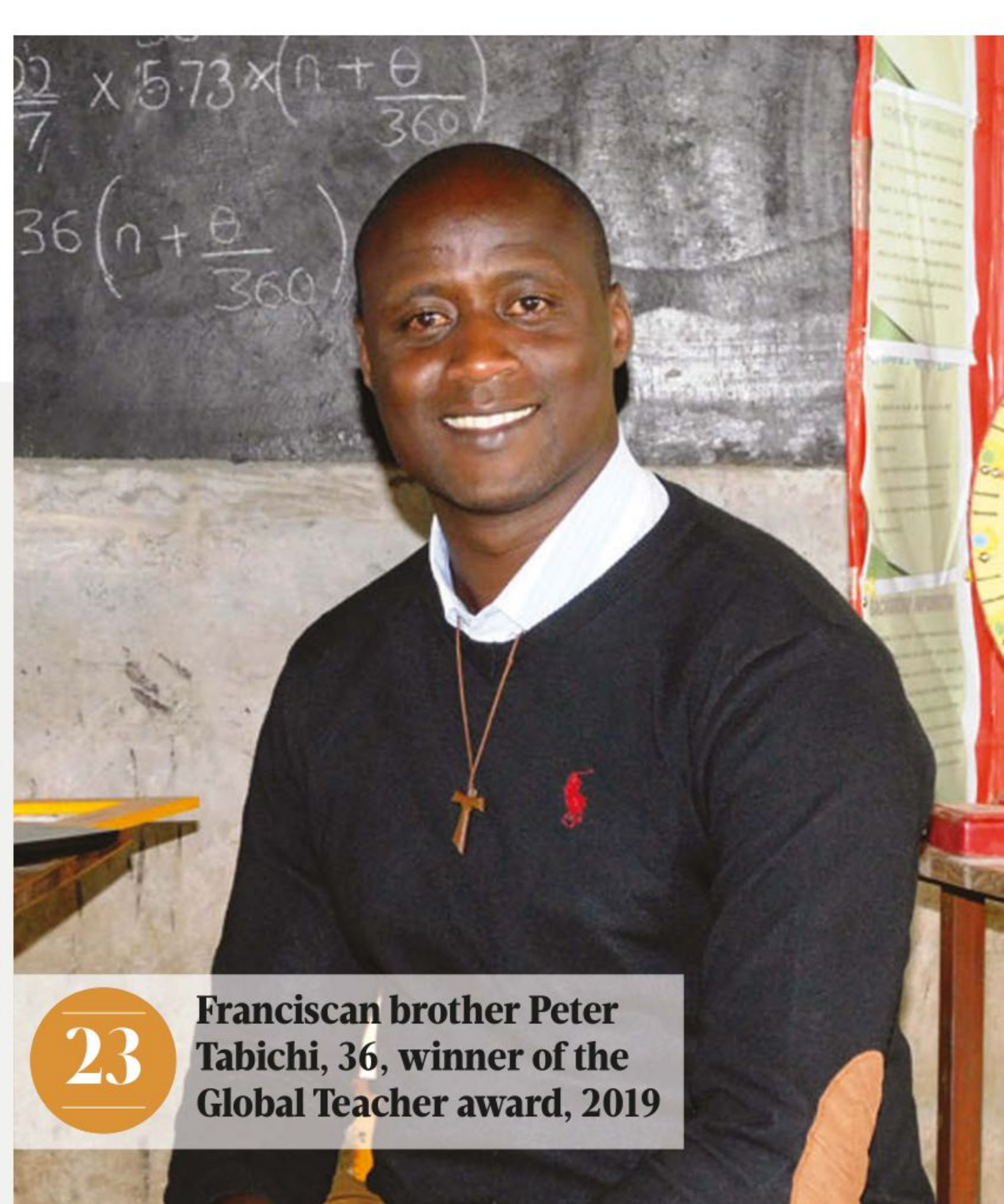
It is part of a wider debate about the damaging influence of social media not just on politics but, for instance, on the mental health of young people and on the coarsening of public debate. There are daily reports of death threats to British politicians, and with the 2016 murder of Jo Cox MP in mind, they have to be taken seriously. The anonymity that social media allows its users to hide their identity behind has made regulating them extremely difficult. It cannot continue.

Mr Trump is not blameless. For instance his incitement of foreign hackers when he declared during his campaign: “Russia, if you are listening, I hope you are able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing ...” was characteristically irresponsible. Robert Mueller found there had been a sharp increase in Russian hacking activity soon afterwards. But this is not why he won. He appealed to a large section of the population who felt let down by mainstream politicians. The danger is that he is merely offering a new set of unicorns with which to beguile them, such as the paranoid idea of “traitors within”. He too has to address the real issues; he has no short cuts either.



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The current global crisis might be the last chance we have to bring the Christian social vision that inspired the post-war settlement in Europe back from the margins to the centre / By JOHN MILBANK

Christians must show there is another way

THE GENUINE horror of Christchurch and the somewhat comic nightmare that is Brexit: these are two manifestations of a global general crisis. One dimension of this crisis is a widespread breakdown of trust in established institutions and a searching for alternatives, some of them extreme.

It is tempting to think of this in terms of a collapse of a liberal, secular order that has held sway since 1945. Anything international is shunned: we see a rise in prejudice against minorities and incomers and an increase in atavistic attitudes that often take religious forms. In this context, traditional Christians often think of themselves as bystanders, just as dismayed as their secular fellows at the rapid debasement of a common coin of decency. This response is a mistake. The order that is being abandoned was, to a large degree, as historians increasingly recognise, not a purely secular one; rather, it was the last Christian settlement in the West, however imperfectly so, and however much its Christian character was being eroded almost from the outset.

TO UNDERSTAND this, it is useful to think of the parallels between today and the 1930s. Then, as now, one witnessed the clash of virulent and incompatible ideologies: then, of American-style liberalism, fascism and communism; today, of neoliberalism and national populisms of right and left. Then, as now, there were also awkward hybrids. Christians of all kinds made a creative and, to a degree, concerted response to the situation in the years before the war, allied to a certain Christian revival after the existential disillusionments following World War One.

For the most part, they rejected both individualism and collectivism, along with the reduction of human beings to the levels of animal and machine. In proclaiming “personalist” philosophies, leading Christian thinkers insisted on the priority of social relating and reciprocity over either a controlling state or an anarchic market. They insisted on the dignity of each person. They emphasised that human fulfilment is achieved only through performing a meaningful social role. This personalism often involved a link with “corporatism” in the sense of recognising the political bearing of the economic: each working person should act as a

participatory citizen rather than as a narcissistic, passive, bourgeois subject.

Christian thinkers like Nikolai Berdyaev, Max Scheler, Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain thought that the primacy of the person, of the social, and of reconciling processes over both money and the law, required a sense of the spiritual dimension and the orientation of natural justice to the supernatural ends of charity. Christendom was not seen as merely a social, cultural and geographical reality; Christian faith was regarded as inseparable from it. A desire for a qualification of state sovereign power internally – the idea of “subsidiarity” – was matched by a call for a merging of sovereign authorities externally – the idea of “solidarity”.

THE DEFEAT OF fascism and the subsequent fear of communism gave these ideas more traction. In the face of atrocity, it appeared plausible that mere human rights must be supplemented with a natural law sense of human dignity and of equivalent human duty. Eugenics, a progressive cause in the pre-war years, was shunned. While natural birth processes were newly favoured, within Catholicism there was a new appreciation of marriage as an honoured spiritual vocation. Since democratic votes had in some instances led to elected dictatorships, democracy tended to be understood as ensuring the equal dignity and right to flourishing of every citizen rather than as a free vote followed by “winner takes all”. This encouraged the rise of welfare programmes and state aid for industry – borrowing from totalitarian examples in order to resist their future lure.

All these elements contributed to the foundation of the UN, the beginnings of the European project, the emergence of the welfare state in Britain and the sustaining of the New Deal in the United States. Christian activists and theologians were to the fore in each case (Maritain was involved in drafting the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Together with many secular sympathisers, they crafted an order which to some extent engendered a remarkable period of Western peace and prosperity. One can argue that it did so because it successfully tempered extreme liberalism and capitalism. A sense of inherent human dignity and the proper modes of human flourishing in society qualified a culture of mere rights and utility.



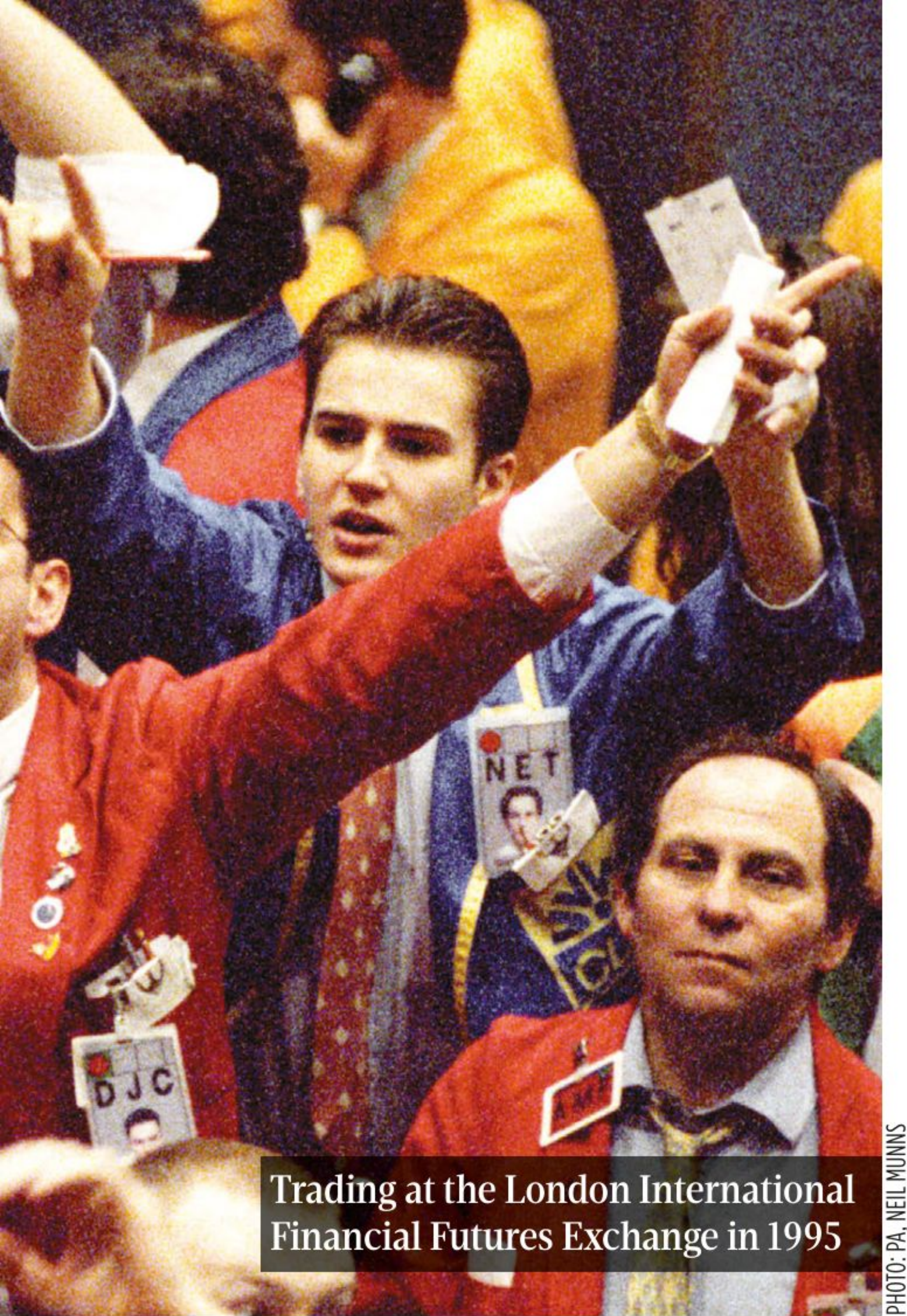
In each nation, some sense of belonging and of the common good prevailed.

How did this collapse? Some complain that after 1945 a purely secular order was warped by Christian influence. The trouble was that just the opposite happened. The fear of totalitarianism was so strong that too many concessions were made to mere rights and democracy. The enterprise of a “new Christendom” was dropped. Christian Democrats became complacent about a supposedly “purely natural” order dominated by family selfishness, capitalism and consumerism and careless of the environment. Mediating civil institutions started to languish, leaving the field free to state and market.

IN BRITAIN IT was worse, and this explains some of our current impasse. On the Continent, fear of the over-mighty state and even of democracy prevailed: the power of individual states was qualified in various ways, and much of the older personalist and corporatist ethos was sustained, producing various modes of social market. Vocationalism and craft training were encouraged. But in Britain, success in war produced a great confidence in the state, while corporate, mediating and vocational structures were now somewhat tainted with the memory of fascism.

Across Europe, the Christian dimension of the post-war settlement was rapidly thinned out. The more political pronouncements of the second Vatican Council only confirmed this surrender. The children of this settlement understood little of its spiritual dimension: the only values they imbibed were freedom and democracy. Hence their outrage in the 1960s, when they discovered that not everything was permitted. They abandoned not only a Christian horizon but an older socialist one also. Their cultural liberalism quickly and inevitably ushered in the value-free unregulated economic free-for-all that arrived in the 1980s. Mammon came to power with theological and ecclesial complicity, with Christian thinkers often embracing the secular as if it were the will of Providence. In reality, this surrender

Google is everywhere, keeping watch on children. I hope the little beasts subvert it



Trading at the London International Financial Futures Exchange in 1995

PHOTO: PA, NEIL MUMFIS

helped to confirm a secularisation whose triumph was as yet not so certain after all.

TODAY WE understand the real sacrificial price of the monetary god. On the one hand, we have the mobile, global super-rich and their metropolitan allies concentrated within the finance and information economies. They share a common liberal culture and often benefit from cheaper migrant labour. On the other, we have the sedentary majority, working and middle class, who inhabit the peripheries in every sense. They are often both less well-off and subject to the negative impact of migration, and silently alienated from the novel mores and artistic obsessions of the metropolitan elites and their media outlets. We are all too familiar with the political upshots. The shallow meaning inherent in endless change means nothing to those outside the smarter post codes. Deprived of religious and metaphysical goals, they reach for land and blood, sometimes following leaders that cynically borrow religious slogans and tropes. Genuine religion is reduced to just another “identity” and even, insultingly, to race – as with Jacinda Ardern’s superficial response to the atrocity in Christchurch.

As in the 1930s, so now it is up to religious people – especially Christians – to assert a true, natural-law based alternative, which will put the personal and the interpersonal before either procedure or contract; which will refuse the simplistic alternative of a sterile cosmopolitanism versus a bigoted belonging. Only the sense of what we all have in common under God, and the way this is diversely and sacramentally mediated by sacred places and their organic linkages across borders, will save us. Christians cannot count on, nor of course hope for, another global war to puncture our illusions. Somehow, we have to drag our political vision from the margins back to the centre. Perhaps the current crisis may provide the opportunity.

John Milbank is a theologian, philosopher, poet and political theorist. His latest book, co-authored with Adrian Pabst, is *The Politics of Virtue*.



ONE OF the most delightful productions in London right now is Simon McBurney’s take on *The Magic Flute* at the English National Opera, in collaboration with the theatre company, Complicité. It seems to capture some of the music hall atmosphere of the theatre for which Mozart actually wrote this preposterous piece. In the programme, there’s a fine essay by the mathematician Marcus du Sautoy on the way Mozart used numbers in the opera for their symbolic value, overt and covert.

For, as most of us know, Freemasonry and its rituals and values and numbers is the unacknowledged subject of the opera, with Tamino’s quest for Truth and Love being a take on the masonic project. And in this production the Central Committee that decides things in Sarastro’s Temple really is like a board meeting; a gathering of self-regarding men in suits.

It reminds me of the one time I went to a Masonic temple, the central one in Covent Garden when, for the first time the Freemasons opened up their centre for outsiders and gave guided tours. It was, I may say, a disappointment. Having been fascinated by Freemasonry precisely because it was forbidden to Catholics on the basis that you must swear obedience to an unknown authority, I was rather looking forward to scenes of arcane ritual and mysterious symbolism. In fact, the centre of the place, known as the Boardroom, looked exactly like it said, a boardroom, or perhaps a 1930s-style cinema, only with an organ. It may as well have been the centre of operations of the Rotary Club, except with lots of protractors and triangles.

Really, I think the Masons should have kept its mystique hidden; that way it would have preserved its exotic allure.

THERE is a hellish new development from Google: a so-called home monitoring system that will enable absent parents to supervise their children. The features it is developing under a European patent include “detecting child mischief”, followed by a verbal warning to the child from a smart speaker, and monitoring children via a network of devices and then warning parents via smartphone about what’s going on (it can identify bad language). Sensitive microphones can detect

whispering to warn parents that their young are plotting among themselves. You know that bit in Proverbs: “The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good”? Well, it’s now Google that’s everywhere, keeping watch on children on behalf of their absentee parents. I hope the little beasts manage to subvert it.

IT WAS obviously unwise of the polemicist Jordan Peterson to be photographed with his arm round a man with a t-shirt bearing the legend: I’m a Proud ISLAMOPHOBE. It’s designed to give offence, and it has. Professor Peterson has paid a price, though: the Faculty of Divinity at Cambridge has withdrawn its offer of a visiting fellowship this Michaelmas on the grounds that – according to the Vice-Chancellor, Stephen Toope – the “casual endorsement” of the message on the t-shirt was “antithetical to the work of a Faculty that prides itself in the advancement of inter-faith understanding. Some difficult decisions will always be necessary to ensure that our universities remain places of robust, often challenging and even uncomfortable dialogue, while balancing academic freedom with respect for members of our community”.

Excuse me? What I think this convoluted prose means is that the faculty will in fact *not* be a place of robust, often challenging and even uncomfortable dialogue, because anyone with views that may challenge the consensus will simply not be admitted. Peterson was intending during his stay to write lectures on the Bible stories contained in Exodus – which, I would have thought, would be pretty challenging. And, doing so, he would have profited from the exegetical expertise of the faculty.

And indeed, he might have engaged with the Islamic members of the faculty. As Peterson says: “I thought that I could extend my knowledge of the relevant stories ... and that doing so would be useful for me, for faculty members who might be interested in speaking with me and to the students”.

Well it would have been. Instead, cowardly dons are closing debate, and minds.



Melanie McDonagh is senior writer at the London Evening Standard.

The denial of religious freedom in the Islamic world is an obstacle to peace between Christians and Muslims. But there are lessons to be drawn from the Catholic Church's own difficult journey to an embrace of religious freedom which Francis could share with Muslim leaders / **By DANIEL PHILPOTT**

A pathway to freedom

IN BECOMING the first pope to visit the Arabian Peninsula last month, Pope Francis evoked his namesake, St Francis of Assisi, who, near the end of his life, journeyed to Egypt to try to convert the Muslim Sultan to Christianity and ended up engaging him in a dialogue about peace. In his dialogue with Muslims in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), our latter-day Francis raised the issue that is proving the greatest obstacle to peace and reconciliation between Catholics and Muslims: religious freedom.

Tu quoque! Pope Francis' Muslim friends might well have pointed out that St Francis encountered the Sultan on the front lines of the wars of the Crusades – not the most sparkling example of the Church's contribution to religious freedom. Or that fifteenth and sixteenth-century Catholic Spain expelled Muslims and Jews who then found refuge under a different Sultan in the far more tolerant Ottoman Empire. Or that the Church had conducted brutal inquisitions over the course of six centuries, and that Catholics had fought sometimes savage religious wars with Protestants for a century-and-a-half.

Still, Pope Francis showed integrity in not trying to side-step the issue of religious freedom in his dialogue with Muslim leaders. We may hope that he will do the same on his visit to Morocco this weekend.

There is no doubt that the Muslim world suffers from a deficit of the universal human right to freedom of religion that protects individuals and communities in their search for religious belief, their practice and expression of it, and their right to seek to persuade others of their teachings. The 47 Muslim-majority countries of the world are on average far less religiously free than the rest of the world, and are less free than Christian-majority countries.

Only a few miles from the hall where Pope Francis conducted dialogue with leading Muslim clerics in Abu Dhabi looms Saudi Arabia, which prohibits Christians even from worshipping. Iran imprisons and executes Bahá'ís. Abu Dhabi is not as repressive as Saudi Arabia or Iran but it, too, falls well short of allowing full religious freedom. Christians and other non-Muslims are required to worship in private and are forbidden from expressing their faith publicly. Morocco – where the population is



Worshippers at St Peter's Cathedral, Rabat, which the Pope is due to visit on Sunday

99 per cent Muslim – is also repressive, albeit from a different direction, governing the Muslim religious community tightly and muzzling the teaching of doctrines outside of the school of Islam that it favours.

While Pope Francis should speak as a candid friend of the dearth of religious freedom in the Muslim world, the Church's history forbids triumphalism – and might even offer Muslims a pathway to the future.

Like yesterday's Catholics, today's Muslims widely fear religious freedom, perceiving it as a Western export

From the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries, when the Church was losing its grip on its medieval temporal power, it feared religious freedom, much as many Muslims do today. Its rivals were Protestant reformers and Enlightenment intellectuals and their political agents, who portrayed the Church as a purveyor of torture and superstition – and whose version of religious freedom sent Catholics to the gibbet or the guillotine.

In reaction, nineteenth-century theologians and popes thundered against religious freedom. They included Gregory XVI, who called liberty of conscience “an absurd and erroneous proposition” in 1832, and Pius IX, who condemned religious freedom in his *Syllabus of Errors* in 1864. The Church hierarchy's political “thesis” was that states

would establish the Catholic Church and restrain other faiths. The Church acquiesced to non-establishment and to religious freedom only on the “hypothesis” that Catholics were in a minority.

Eventually, the Church found its way to embracing the idea of religious freedom, which it proclaimed in its landmark declaration, *Dignitatis Humanae*, at the close of the Second Vatican Council in 1965. Inspired by this teaching and by the council's more general endorsement of human rights, the Church went on to challenge dictators and champion democracy in Poland, the Philippines, Chile, South Korea, Ukraine, Malawi, and many other countries.

HOW DID THE Catholic Church travel from fearing to fomenting freedom? Not by adopting the purely secular logic of its rivals but rather by developing a teaching drawn from its own history and tradition. It looked back to the early centuries of the Church, when Church Fathers like Tertullian and Lactantius argued for religious freedom for all people living under the Roman Empire. While Augustine and Aquinas, two of the Church's greatest theologians, defended the coercion of heretics by the state, they both stressed the free character of faith, a central component of *Dignitatis Humanae*.

The Church's favourable experience under constitutions of religious freedom in the United States and in Western Europe after the Second World War taught it that living under a constitution that provides genuine religious freedom need not be a threat. Twentieth-century intellectuals like Jacques Maritain, Heinrich Rommen and John Courtney Murray developed arguments for religious freedom that retrieved favourable doctrines from tradition and set them in the context of modern constitutional democracy. While opponents of religious freedom at the Second Vatican Council objected that “error has no rights”, proponents rejoined: “Yes – but people do.” By tying religious freedom to human dignity, the Council fathers untied it from the religious relativism and secularism that had caused earlier popes to reject it.

LIKE YESTERDAY'S Catholics, today's Muslims widely fear religious freedom, perceiving it as a Western export that is part of a noxious package that includes individualism, the breakdown of the family, secularism, materialism and the efforts of Christian missionaries to convert them. While the Western

media – including Christian commentators who should know better – often opine that what Islam needs is a “Reformation” or an “Enlightenment”, Muslims are as unlikely as Catholics to view either of these episodes entirely favourably. In recent decades, regimes claiming to be grounded in modern, enlightened ideologies were so determined to suppress traditional Islam that they turned Syria and Egypt into the torture capitals of the world. And the Reformation’s violent fracture of Christendom hardly offers an alluring future to followers of a religion in which Sunnis and Shias are already bitterly divided.

Yet, just as the Catholic Church did, Muslims may find in their own history and tradition the grounds for embracing religious freedom. The Qur’an contains one of the strongest statements of freedom in the texts of any of the great world religions: “There is no compulsion in religion.” Muslim proponents of religious freedom have always quoted this. The Prophet Muhammad, although he was a conqueror, established tolerance towards non-Muslims, including Jews, in the Constitution of Medina, and never punished anyone for leaving the faith.

Muslim countries and regions that were religiously tolerant can be found in medieval Spain, in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire and in early twentieth-century Iran, Egypt and Central Asia. Today, 11 Muslim-majority countries – nearly one-fourth of the

total – are religiously free. Seven of them are in Western Africa. There, Sufi spirituality and a history of Islam arriving through bands of traders and missionaries, not by conquest, combine to yield remarkable levels of inter-religious harmony. Their populations also exhibit high levels of religious devotion, refuting the objection that religious tolerance requires secularism, or comes only with waning belief and practice.

It is important to note, too, that among the 36 Muslim-majority countries that are not religiously free, several are not Islamist theocracies but secular dictatorships governed by a Western ideology that calls for the marginalisation of religion in order to modernise society. Turkey might no longer fit this description but Egypt, Syria and the Central Asian “stans” all do. The French Revolution, not just the Iranian Revolution, is responsible for the Muslim world’s dearth of religious freedom.

TODAY, MUSLIM pioneers of religious freedom like Mustafa Akyol and Abdullah Saeed argue for religious freedom on the basis of the Qur’an, the rationalist tradition in Islamic thought and periods of tolerance in Islamic history – much as Catholic pioneers drew from Scripture and tradition. Muslims will also welcome empirical evidence that religious freedom is inversely correlated with civil war, terrorism, and poverty, all problems to which

Muslim-majority countries are disproportionately prone.

While the idea of freedom of belief and practice still lacks the support of a majority of Muslim jurists and intellectuals, all of the above factors are seeds which, were they to be nurtured, could grow into a fully-fledged and widely shared adoption of the doctrine of religious freedom. Such a prospect may seem unlikely today, but it also seemed unlikely within Catholicism, even on the eve of the Second Vatican Council, when the Vatican was still suppressing the writings of proponents of religious freedom.

The Church’s pathway to *Dignitatis Humanae* provides a model for Islam. Both Catholicism and Islam long predate modernity, were sharply challenged by it and then fought back. Through embracing religious freedom, the Catholic Church reached a rapprochement with modernity, but on its own terms. That Islam might travel the same pathway is a proposal that today’s Francis could raise in his meetings with Muslim scholars and leaders this weekend.

Daniel Philpott is Professor of Political Science at the University of Notre Dame and author of *Religious Freedom In Islam: The Fate of a Universal Human Right in the Muslim World Today*, to be published on 25 April by Oxford University Press at £22.99 (Tablet price £20.69).



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The Franciscan friar and spiritual writer **Richard Rohr** – in conversation with **Jon M. Sweeney** – discusses his new book, his recent illnesses and the prospects for reform in the Catholic Church

Rediscovering Christ

Jon Sweeney: For those who have been reading you devotedly for many years, how does your new book fit in your body of work?

Richard Rohr: *The Universal Christ* is essentially my scriptural and spiritual attempt to reground the Christian message where it first started and flourished, if we are to believe the hymns in Colossians 1, Ephesians 1, the Prologue to John's Gospel, 1 John 1, 1 Peter 1, and Hebrews 1. Yes, there are lots of *ones* there, which already says a lot about how our Gospel was first read and how foundational this revelation was meant to be.

However, unfortunately, an understanding of Christ as universal was appreciated and developed more in the Eastern Churches and among the Eastern "Fathers" than it was in the West, which was always more individualistic. After the one holy, undivided Church "divided" in 1054, the Western Church largely lost this corporate, social, and historical understanding of the Gospel, and, with it, our very notion of the Christ.

For all practical purposes, we in the West reduced our understanding to just Jesus' last name. And that is not just me being clever, but reveals the loss of a pivotal part of the Gospel which grounds Jesus' message in Creation and makes us a more "natural" religion than one that entirely depends on a revelation a mere 2,000 years ago. That is a mere second in geological time! Which leaves about 13.7 billion years empty of the Divine Presence. That just cannot be true.

J.S. There seems to be something very Franciscan about this topic. Did you feel that, in the writing? Were you in some ways returning to your mystical Franciscan roots?

R.R. Without any doubt, it was primarily



Richard Rohr

the Franciscan tradition that rediscovered a Creation-based understanding of the Gospel and still remained within mainline Christianity. However, it was only in our early period that we tried to create the philosophical and theological foundation for St Francis' radical incarnationism, especially in the writings of St Bonaventure and Blessed John Duns Scotus. They gave intellectual heft to what Francis spiritually intuited when he spoke of animals, elements, and *all* other humans as "brothers" and "sisters" to each of us.

Yet, after that exciting first century, we Franciscans largely became good pious priests and brothers, and shared in the individualistic reading of the Gospel, along with most of the Western Church. It was hard to hold on to our "alternative orthodoxy", especially after the absolute conformity that was required of all theologians and spiritual writers after the Reformation.

Duns Scotus taught us "the univocity of all being"; that we could speak of all creatures with "one consistent voice", as opposed to the Thomistic view of the mere "analogy of being" (although I would have been happy if Catholics had at least believed *that!*)

J.S. What's next for you, Richard? I know you've had some health problems. Are you planning future projects?

R.R. Since my heart attack 15 months ago, and the return of my prostate cancer, I know my time is limited. But any of us must say the same.

Seventy-six years is more than I ever

expected. The monograph I would like to complete, if I can, is on my hero, St Paul. I am convinced that he understood all our major Christian notions (incarnation, the human person, redemption, sin, suffering, and punishment) in a primarily collective and social sense. Once you begin to imagine that way, it becomes rather evident in his letters, I think. He was offering history a radical revisioning of both religion and society, but we missed it all by making him into an isolated individualist like ourselves. We made a superlative mystic into a mere moralist and zealot.

J.S. You are one of the most popular Catholic priests in the United States. What do you make of what's happening in the Church today? What do you make of this near-schism we seem to be undergoing? Is there hope for a unified Catholic Church in the second half of the twenty-first century?

R.R. You are asking way too much of me! I cannot see with that big a lens. Let me just offer this. When I see that following a worldwide, ecumenical Council of the Church in the 1960s, its inspired teaching could in so many ways be undone and ignored (directly or indirectly) by two subsequent popes, a whole generation of bishops, numerous seminary faculties, and legions of young priests who are not known for being either pastoral or humble, I must say that I have serious doubts about the Church's ability to reform itself. It aligned with the Roman Empire after 313 CE, and it consistently still prefers power and authority over love and service. These seem always to win out. The paedophilia scandal again reveals this ever-recurring "cancer of clericalism".

The Catholic tradition contains huge gems and jewels of wisdom, and will always be with us, but when it seeks righteousness instead of holiness, it is more a part of the problem than any good solution. In the next century, God is going to show us a very different shape for church.

The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope For and Believe by Richard Rohr is published this month by SPCK at £9.99 (Tablet price, £9).

Jon M. Sweeney is the editor of *Francis of Assisi in His Own Words: The Essential Writings*, published by Paraclete Press at £13.99 (Tablet price, £12.59).

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"Open my eyes, that I may see wonderful things."

- Psalm 119:18

Theo has spent his childhood in darkness, but you can help children like him. Give before 14th May 2019 and every £1 you donate to our See the Way appeal will be doubled by the UK government.

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God bless you,

Rebecca

Rebecca Molyneux
CBM Programme Manager



Theo has been living his life in darkness, due to his cataracts



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The great Danish theologian created a completely new philosophical style, rooted in the inward drama of being human. His latest biographer was drawn to him precisely because he addressed a deep need for God within the human heart with intellectual brilliance and passionate urgency / **By CLARE CARLISLE**

A life lived forwards

IN MAY 2013 the 200th anniversary of Søren Kierkegaard's birth was commemorated in many cities around the world. In London, the celebration took place on a Sunday at St Katharine's, the Danish Lutheran church by Regent's Park. Kierkegaard's favourite New Testament passage from the Letter of James ("Every good and perfect gift is from above") was one of the texts for the morning service. I loved the simple grace of the bare white church, and was touched by the pastor's openness as she invited everyone to take Communion. After a lunch of rye bread, herrings and Danish cheese, I gave a lecture about Mary, Jesus's mother, whose faith and courage Kierkegaard admired throughout his life. I began my talk by remembering Anne Kierkegaard, the middle-aged peasant who gave birth to Denmark's greatest philosopher on 5 May 1813.

GEORGE PATTISON, then Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford, had written a stage adaptation of Kierkegaard's book *Repetition* for the occasion. The play was performed in the church that evening, bringing Kierkegaard to life in a way I could not have imagined possible. As the actor playing him paced across the makeshift stage, I marvelled at this echo, in a Camden church, of urgent spiritual questions pursued two centuries earlier by a slight, hunch-backed figure with "remarkable blue eyes, deep and soulful" – pursued through the streets of Copenhagen, in churches and theatres, and through the pages of countless books. I found myself in tears.

I was in St Katharine's Church that Sunday because, after reading theology and philosophy at Cambridge in the 1990s, I had stayed on at university to do a PhD on Kierkegaard. At the time, this felt like my path of least

ILLUSTRATION: PETER KLÆSTRUP, ROYAL LIBRARY, DENMARK



A contemporary caricature of Kierkegaard

resistance: it was a way of deferring the question of what to do with my life. I was more interested in travelling and falling in love than in pursuing a career. I wasn't planning to become a Kierkegaard scholar, or a lecturer in philosophy, or any kind of academic.

I became those things anyway, and Kierkegaard remains endlessly interesting to me. This is because he addressed a deep need for God within the human heart – a need for love, for wisdom, for peace – and he did so with a rare and passionate urgency. Though he wrestled with "the task of becoming a Christian", he was a polemical thinker. At the end of his life he launched a vehement attack on Denmark's state Church. Perhaps he had too much disdain for institutional religion, but by looking beyond this he appealed to people who struggled to connect with more conventional Christianity.

It is difficult to say what caused my tears as I watched *Repetition* in St Katharine's, but it had something to do with casting a sideways glance at my own life, and seeing meaning there. Over the years, I had often doubted the value of intellectual work, doubted whether the studies of philosophy I had drifted into were what I should be doing. Sitting in that white church with all the other people who cared enough about Kierkegaard to spend a day celebrating his birthday, I felt a new confidence in whatever

it was that brought me there. By then, in fact, I had been baptised (in my thirties) as a Catholic – another decision that felt more instinctive than rational.

LOOKING BACK, I think that affecting encounter with Kierkegaard in 2013 sowed the seed of an idea: I would write a philosophical and spiritual biography of Kierkegaard that explored his questions about how to be human. The book is published next week. Its title comes from the Swedish writer Fredrika Bremer, who visited Copenhagen in the 1840s: "Søren Kierkegaard stands on his isolated pillar like a Simon Stylites, his gaze fixed uninterruptedly on a single point. He places his microscope on this point, carefully investigating the tiniest atoms, the most fleeting motions, the innermost alterations. And it is about this that he speaks and writes endless folios. For him, everything is to be found at this point. But this point is – the human heart." Bremer noted that his works were especially admired by female readers: "the philosophy of the heart must be important to them."

Kierkegaard's "philosophy of the heart" has proved equally important to men, as we see from a glance at successive generations of his readers, among them some of the most influential thinkers and artists of the last century. He created a new philosophical style, rooted in the inward drama of being human. Nowadays Kierkegaard is most often associated either with a dark existentialism that emphasises anxiety and despair, or with the flippant dandyism dramatised in *Either/Or*, his first major work, containing a fictional "Diary of a Seducer" that scandalised its first readers. Yet I find Kierkegaard's deep reflections on the spiritual possibilities of the human heart even more interesting than these attention-grabbing themes.

IN HIS EFFORT to make sense of himself, he grappled with Europe's awesome intellectual tradition, absorbing ancient Greek metaphysics, the Old and New Testaments, the Church Fathers and medieval monastics, Luther and Lutheran pietism, modern philosophy and Romantic literature. During three fertile, tumultuous decades of the nineteenth century, he channelled these currents of thought into his own life, feeling their tensions and paradoxes move through him. And at the same time his heart was pierced,

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filled, stretched, and bruised by a series of intense, ambivalent loves: his gentle mother, Anne, his brooding father, Michael Pedersen, his devoted fiancée, Regine Olsen; his city, his writing, his God.

AFTER BREAKING his engagement to Regine, writing became the fabric of Kierkegaard's existence, the most vibrant love of his life. This was a compelling, consuming love: as a young man he found it difficult to start writing, but once he began he could hardly stop. He wrote with extraordinary fluidity, transposing his over-sensitive soul into his beloved Danish language. Even in translation, we can feel the rhythm of his prose, the poetry of his thinking. During the 1840s he produced a rapid sequence of great books, and filled numerous journals and notebooks.

Kierkegaard wrote as both a philosopher and a spiritual seeker. He was deeply inspired by Socrates, as well as by many biblical figures. In the Old Testament story of Abraham's arduous journey with Isaac up and down Mount Moriah, he discerned the inward religious movements – the deep longing for God, the anxious struggle to understand his vocation, the search for an authentic spiritual path – that shaped his own life.

Philosopher of the Heart: The Restless Life of Søren Kierkegaard travels alongside Kierkegaard as he pursues the “question of existence” that both animated and troubled him: how to be a human being in this world? It begins by joining a 30-year-old Kierkegaard on a train – a new experience for the philosopher, since the railways had just been built. Sitting in the first-class carriage, facing backwards, he watches his own journey unfold. He cannot see where the train is going: the landscape only comes into view once he has passed through it. And he has come to think that life itself is like this: “It is quite true what philosophy says, that life must be understood backward. But then one forgets the other principle, that it must be *lived forward*.” We have some knowledge of the past, but not of the future – and as for the present, it is continually in motion, always eluding our grasp.

KIERKEGAARD CRITICISED the abstractions of academic philosophy, insisting that we must work out who we are, and how to live, right in the middle of life itself, with an open future ahead of us. Just as we cannot step off the train while it is moving, so we cannot step away from life to reflect on its meaning. Similarly, my biography does not consider Kierkegaard's life from a remote, knowing perspective, but joins him on his journey and confronts its uncertainties with him.

Philosopher of the Heart: The Restless Life of Søren Kierkegaard is published on 4 April by Allen Lane at £25 (Tablet price, £22.50).

Clare Carlisle is Reader in Philosophy and Theology at King's College, London.

‘These fragments I have shored against my ruins ...’



In the fourth of our series in which writers recommend a book that has brought meaning and hope at a turning point in their lives, **Frank Cottrell-Boyce** chooses T.S.Eliot's *The Waste Land*

My dad did an Open University degree back when lectures were delivered via television in the wee small hours. Because I liked to be with him, I would join him in our new living room and watch men with improbable facial furniture talk about art. I remember being strangely thrilled by a talk on Bernini's erotically charged *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*. I also remember slipping back up to bed when Eliot's *The Waste Land* went flying over my head.

I studied English at university but never made my peace with Eliot. His wilful obscurity – the poem had footnotes for Heaven's sake – seemed rooted in snobbery. His best lines were sampled from other poems. But today I think I probably learnt more from *The Waste Land* than from any other poem. I'm thinking of two great blessings and one great hope.

My dad has dementia now. When I sit with him, in that same front room, I read to him. Having exhausted Sherlock Holmes, I somehow ended up back at *The Waste Land*. When I got to the part where the speaker sees someone who was with him “in the ships at Mylae”, dad shouted – with a vigour that made me jump – “Stetson!” and waved his hand in the air, as though he could see Stetson walking down King William Street. *The Waste Land* burst into life around me.

The poem is Eliot's attempt to organise memories, impressions, chunks of poetry into some kind of meaningful whole. “These fragments,” he says, “I have shored against my ruins.” This is what my dad is doing every day, struggling to forge some kind of sense out of the noise and the music of his daily life. In fact, parts of the poem sound exactly like the kind of conversations I have with him: “Do you see nothing? Do you remember ‘Nothing?’ / I remember / Those are pearls that were his eyes.”

Does this sound like I'm dismissing

The Waste Land as the ravings of dementia? No, the poem has alerted me to the heroic creativity that dad has to use to steer his wobbly course through every day. That's the first blessing I found in *The Waste Land*. I say that Eliot and dad – they're a double act now – were busy making sense. I couldn't tell you what that sense means. I have no idea what Eliot was trying to say there. But I know the landscape it describes – the busy river, the office workers walking over the bridge – triggered some memory of his first job. Of course you don't have to understand something to love it. I've always known that – I've no idea why “Billie Jean” or Thomas Nashe's line “brightness falls from the air” move me – but I'd never appreciated it before. That moment unlocked a new ability in me to listen to the music of dad's ramblings without trying to decode them. The second blessing.

But how is it that we can be moved by things we don't quite understand? Why am I moved by that line of Nashe's? Is it because it somehow reverberates with a knowledge we cannot yet grasp? Are the words the echo of some mystery which will one day be opened to us? Is that why such lines stay with us? Is that how music works?

So this is the hope that I found in *The Waste Land* – that the beautiful things that somehow stay with us without us knowing are echoes calling us forward to something unimaginable. That while unlearning how to make sense of the news or what is going on in the house, dad might be learning some greater and more beautiful thing. To quote a line that snagged in my own head long ago without me knowing why – *Praestet fides supplementum sensuum defectui*.

Frank Cottrell-Boyce has won several awards for his screenplays and children's novels.

The first of what is likely to be two polls to elect the president of Ukraine takes place tomorrow. The fate of peace in Europe might hang on the outcome / By MARY DEJEVSKY

Europe's forgotten elections

UKRAINE IS one of four countries that face hotly contested elections in the coming weeks. The others are Israel, Finland and Spain. But it is the one, given its strategic significance, whose absence from the headlines is least comprehensible.

The polls to elect a new president of Ukraine take place tomorrow. A great deal, including – it could be argued – the fate of peace in Europe, hangs on the outcome.

In common with many post-Soviet states, Ukraine relishes its elections, and this one has been especially keenly fought, with the incumbent, Petro Poroshenko, facing 38 other candidates, and an actor, Volodymyr Zelenskiy (pictured), who stars in a popular television series about a fictional president, now topping the polls. Main roads are festooned with colourful posters and the airwaves are abuzz with impassioned discussions and phone-ins.

Ukraine's democracy has its flaws. There are the not-so-hidden hands of the country's tycoons, its "oligarchs", whose money flows into the electoral (and other) war chests of their favourites. There is the undoubted advantage conferred by incumbency in terms of general visibility and airtime. And, for all the popular engagement, there is much cynicism about the venality and general ineffectiveness of politicians. Familiar?

ONE OF THE banes of Ukrainian elections over the past two decades, however – the attempts by outside powers to influence proceedings – seems far less in evidence this time. These are early days, of course. Bad old ways may yet resume during the three weeks before the 21 April run-off between the top two candidates, and the apparent lack of interference could just mean that everyone has got better at doing it less obtrusively. But there are several reasons why, this time around, Ukrainians may be left more or less to their own, admittedly not impeccable, electoral devices.

On the Western side, the Trump administration has shown progressively less interest in parts of the world beyond its own backyard. The US also faces a dilemma in deciding who to back. The contest is so open that any one

of three or four candidates could win, and no one likes to back a loser. Poroshenko was the US choice five years ago, but – and this supplies the best evidence that Ukraine is holding a "real" election – the polls suggest he could lose. Does the US have sufficient clout to save him – and would it use it, if it did?

AS FOR RUSSIA, early warnings about likely Kremlin attempts to manipulate the election have mostly vanished even from the most anti-Russian strands of Ukraine's variegated media. And if Moscow is staying aloof (for the time being at least), there are logical reasons why. As a consequence largely of Russia's own actions, the more Russia-orientated part of Ukraine's electorate has markedly shrunk. Predominantly Russian-speaking Crimea is now de facto part of Russia; the simmering war in the Donbass will prevent most people from voting there, while an estimated million people have fled to Russia from the war zone as refugees. There is an avowedly pro-Russia candidate, Yuriy Boyko, a native of Donetsk and former energy minister, whose main pitch is for peace talks with Russia on the Donbass. But his support hovers around 8 per cent and he has no chance of reaching the run-off.

In sum, Ukraine seems more cohesively orientated towards Europe than it has ever been. And, for all the multiplicity of first-round hopefuls, this election could thus be the most national election of any since Ukraine's independence in 1991.

Of the candidates in with a chance, Anatoliy Hrytsenko, 61, a former defence minister, is the longest shot. However, his personal seriousness, his anti-corruption pitch and his pithy advertising could just hand him victory, in the unlikely event that he makes it into the second round.

Then there is the Orange Revolution heroine, Yulia Tymoshenko, 58, a former prime minister and veteran of presidential campaigns. She spent three years in prison on what were widely seen as politically motivated charges, before returning to Parliament in 2014 as head of the Fatherland grouping. She has given up her trademark plait in favour of a less folksy, more modern, look and has a well-funded and professional operation, with

fleets of cars and a US-style battle bus. After a strong start, she flagged somewhat in the polls, but has been drawing large crowds in the regions bordering the war zone, with a message that it is time to talk about peace with Russia. This has a particular potency, coming from the candidate who also argues most forcefully that Ukraine's destiny lies in Nato and the EU.

Running almost neck and neck with Tymoshenko, after a lacklustre start, is the "chocolate baron" and current president, Petro Poroshenko, 53. A seemingly reluctant candidate five years ago, when he enjoyed overt Western backing, he is running largely on his record, illustrated by slick campaign videos. The difficulty is the mismatch between his vaunted achievements – visa-free travel to the EU and infrastructure improvements – and many voters' experience. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church's break with Moscow is proving less of an asset than expected after fewer other Orthodox Churches than hoped recognising the autocephaly granted by Constantinople and "trading in religion" could lose Poroshenko as many votes as he might gain.

And then there is the big surprise, the actor-comedian, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, 41. So far, he has done little outright campaigning, preferring Facebook and other social media, his non-campaigning live shows, and the popularity of his (fictional) TV series, *Servant of the People* – which also provides his campaign slogan. Nonetheless polls over the last month have given him more than 25 per cent of the vote, compared with at most 18 per cent for Tymoshenko.

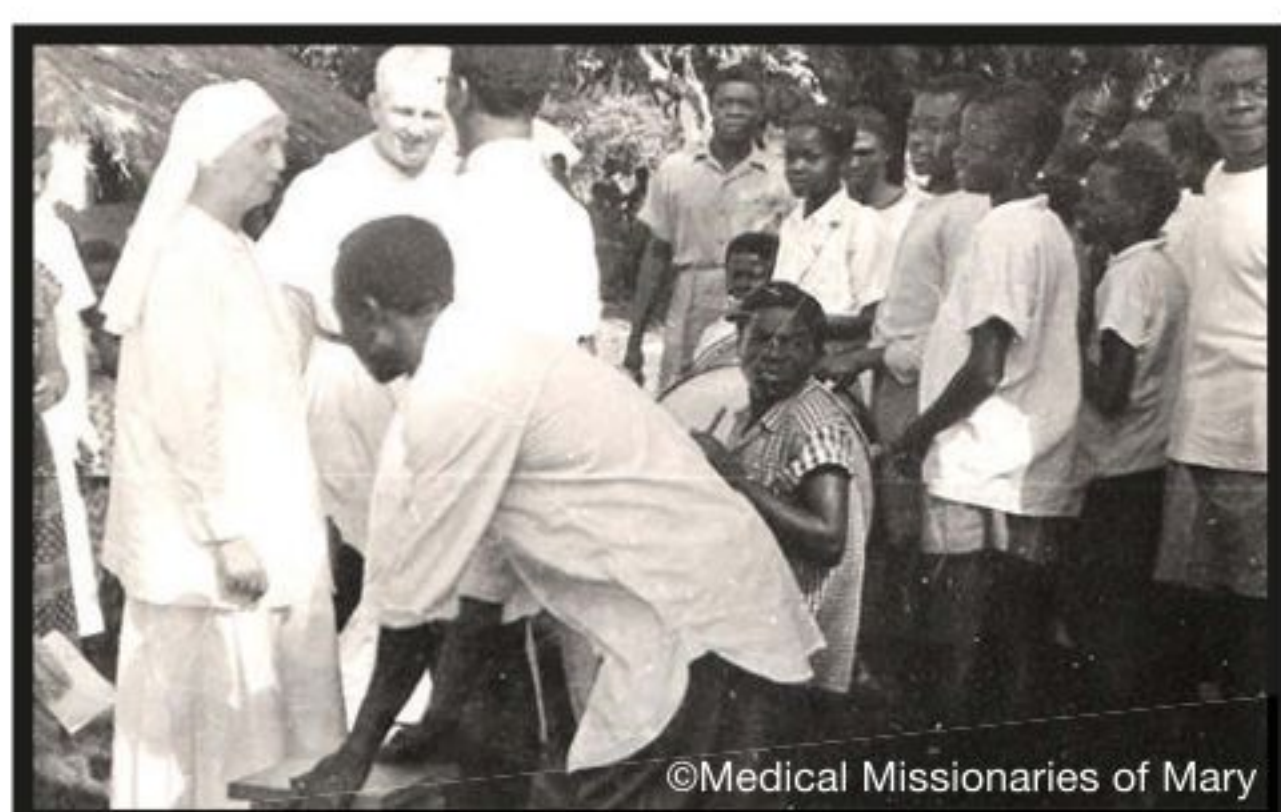
IN MANY WAYS, his anti-establishment, anti-corruption, let's-get-things-done message fits a wider European pattern of anti-politics candidates who appeal to a jaded electorate. But his team say that his appeal extends far beyond the young voters who are said to make up his prime support. His rivals warn of his inexperience and the risks of confusing fiction and reality, and they insist that his constituency is fickle – one drop of rain, they say, and the young will stay at home. But in a two-round race, where the first vote is often said to be "from the heart", while the second is for the head, he could well reach the run-off – and then?

This is a contest that is wide open, and studded with accusations of corruption and malfeasance. The conventional candidates are nervous, as – it must be presumed – are their backers. Alongside the official security at public rallies, there is also a noticeable thuggish contingent that could be instantly mobilised, should the "need" arise. Fourteen years after the Orange Revolution, five years after the tumultuous Euromaidan, Ukraine has a cacophonous democracy; but its transition to a fully law-governed state remains incomplete.

Mary Dejevsky is a writer and broadcaster. She is a former foreign correspondent in Moscow, Paris and Washington, and a special correspondent in China and many parts of Europe.



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Home truths

KEEN-EYED viewers of the new Channel 4 comedy *Home* will have noticed that the Syrian asylum-seeker at the centre of the plot is a middle-class Christian from Damascus.

British-Moroccan actor Youssef Kerkour plays Sami Ibrahim, an English teacher who smuggles himself over from Calais in the car boot of a family from Dorking and ends up living with them. In the heart of suburbia he encounters curiosity, welcome, prejudice, and the assumption that he must be a Muslim.

Writer and co-star Rufus Jones explains why Sami's character is a Christian: "I thought it might be a good example of confounding expectations and showing someone's cultural background may have commonalities in ways you don't expect." But, he adds, Sami's Christianity becomes "a crucial thing as he seeks refugee status at the Home Office".

After revelations last week of the spurious reasons one Home Office official found for rejecting an Iranian convert to Christianity seeking asylum, let's see if their fictional counterpart treats this Christian asylum-seeker any better.



EACH SPRING, the largest annual gathering of Catholics in the United States takes place near Disneyland, in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, at the Anaheim Convention Centre for the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress. Over three days, 35,000 attend lectures, gather for daily Mass, and browse the stands of Catholic publishers.

We caught Robert Ellsberg, doyen of US religious publishing, at the busy Orbis stand, where many of those milling around were admiring a book jacket depicting the Holy Family as twenty-first century refugees. "While

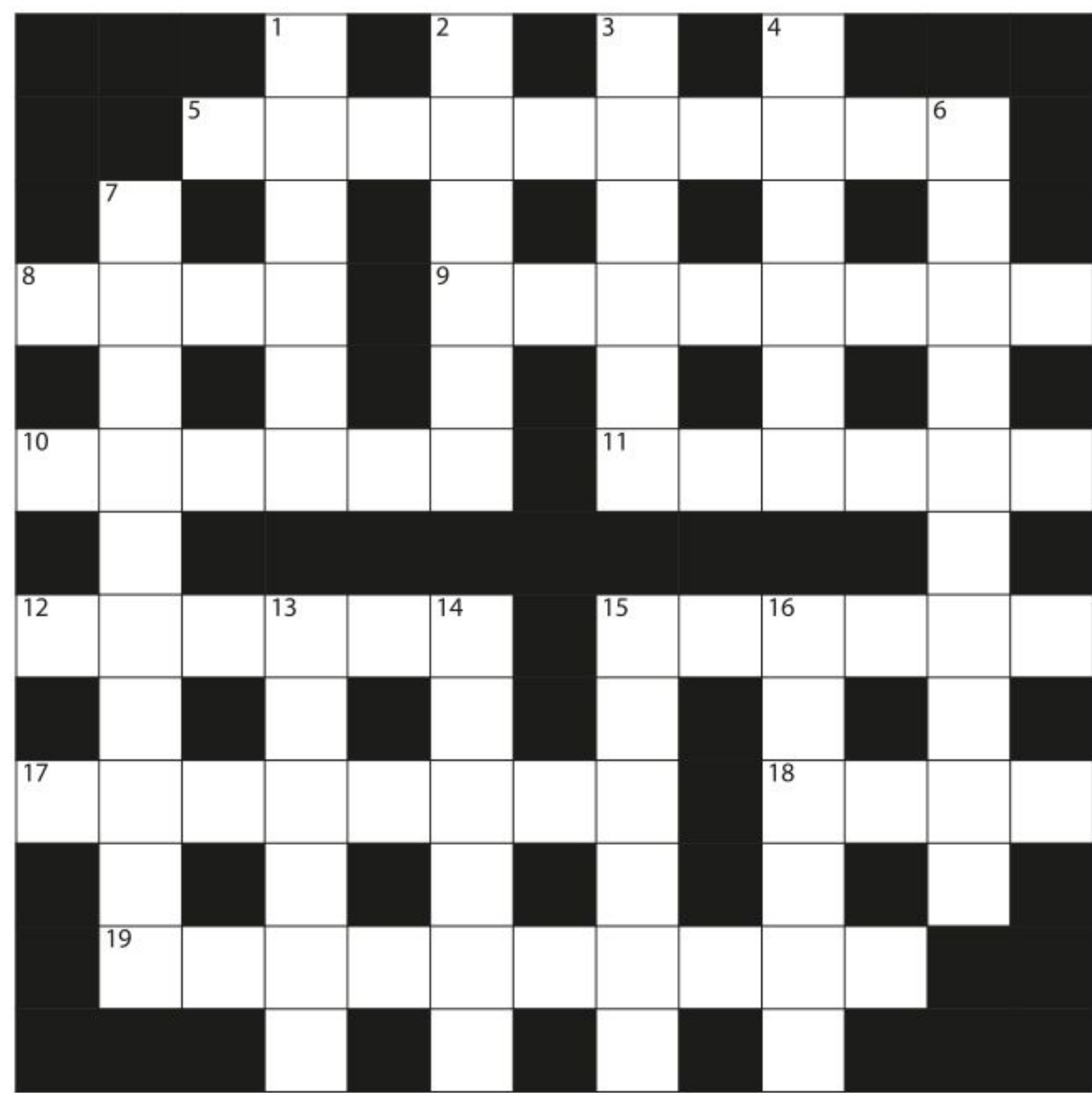
Trump says that refugees are invading the US," Robert told us, "our bestseller is *A Stranger and You Welcomed Me*, a collection of Pope Francis's writings on migrants and refugees."

IN THE late 1950s, a young Irishman was at Confession in a Jesuit church in New York. He was upset by the series of questions the confessor was relentlessly posing, until he was asked: "What do you pray for?" He answered: "I pray every day for the canonisation of Pope Clement XIV." Deploying the name of the pope who suppressed the Jesuits in 1773 ensured that the sacrament was completed without further unease.

A lively raconteur, the asthma from which he suffered all his life did nothing to diminish the vigour, detail or length of the stories told by Michael Glazier, who died, in Florida, on St Patrick's Day, aged 91. With his wife Joan, a nurse, he had moved in the 1950s to New York from the family bookshop in Tralee, Co. Kerry, to work as a publishers' consultant, later setting up his own imprint. Michael Glazier Inc. published a successful series of reference books and dictionaries; though Michael sold his list to Liturgical Press in 1990, his imprint lives on. Every Catholic academic has at least one of his books on their shelves.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 651 | Axe



Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 30 March, The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY. Email: thetablet@thetablet.co.uk, with Crossword in the subject field. Please include your full name, telephone number and email address, and a mailing address. Three books – on Jesus, Christian Art and Catholicism – from the OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random on Friday 12 April. The answers to this week's puzzles and the crossword winner's name will appear in the 20 April issue.

Across

- 5 Halt a bribe in disguise god of Shechem identified (4-6)
8 Almighty line, one royal David starts (4)
9 They follow one position, the French (8)
10 His backing includes a triple 'A', even, for King Joash's secretary (6)
11 Jerahmeel's other wife, a hag in the beginning, stalks a sailor (6)
12 Roman province where a church temperance movement smothers one (6)
15 Mehir's boy's quiet in school (6)
17 There's a kind of acidity in Isaac's new High Priest (8)
18 Clamour after one Israelite has 454 in succession (4)

- 19 Bee zeroing in, confusion finds Israelite camp site (5-5)

Down

- 1 Brigand hierarchy's share supplies Hindu political leader (6)
2 Spanish article included retrospective about a Midianite (6)
3 Here Paul got into trouble putting eggs in an old carrier (6)
4 Xerxes' eunuch's battered hat's large on (6)
6 Roman city of Asia, after Paris yesterday, gets a Stockholm police visit (10)
7 Vow made by Tory secretary of state after story is broken to leave (10)
13 A flower after leaving hospital for

- Haman's son, killed by Jews (6)
14 Classical city which was then as new? (6)
15 Kind of feast that gave one wind in the old days (6)
16 Kind of nirvana, popping drugs into port (6)

SUDOKU | Beginner

			2		8			
	6		3		1		2	
		3		7		1		
4			5		9			3
1	8					7	4	
2			7		4			6
		1		5		6		
	9		1		6		3	
			8		2			

Each 3x3 box, each row and each column must contain all the numbers 1 to 9.

3	8	7	1	5	9	4	6	2
9	2	1	8	4	6	3	5	7
4	5	6	3	2	7	8	9	1
6	9	2	4	7	1	5	8	3
1	7	3	5	6	8	2	4	9
5	4	8	9	3	2	1	7	6
8	6	5	7	1	3	9	2	4
2	1	9	6	8	4	7	3	5
7	3	4	2	9	5	6	1	8

Solution to the 9 March puzzle

Solution to the 9 March crossword No. 648

Across: 1 Armagh; 4 Lassus; 8 Sunna; 9 Adomnan; 10 Serpent; 11 Tribe; 12 Hymenaeus; 17 Simon; 19 Arch-see; 21 Antipas; 22 Runes; 23 Luther; 24 Altars. Down: 1 Assis; 2 Menorah; 3 Grace; 5 Apostle; 6 Sinai; 7 Sinner; 9 Antonians; 13 Maniple; 14 Susanna; 15 Israel; 16 Verses; 18 Motet; 20 Cyril. **Winner:** Dr Gregory Porilo, of Upper Tooting, south-west London.

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LETTERS

• THE EDITOR OF THE TABLET •

✉ 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY ☎ 020 8748 1550 @letters@thetablet.co.uk

All correspondence, including email, must give a full postal address and contact telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to shorten letters.

Gay Catholics

● You tell your readers in your leading article (“Church must reconcile with LGBT+ Catholics”, 16 March) that the emerging consensus is “that same-sex desire is natural (and so God-given)”, and you ask if it is not therefore “natural” for those so attracted to follow these desires. It may be natural but that does not mean it is not wrong, whatever the emerging consensus. It would seem that the moral climate, even among some Catholics, is comparable to that at the time of William Rufus when, as St Anselm wrote, “this sin [of Sodom] has become so common that hardly anyone even blushes for it, and many, being ignorant of its enormity, have abandoned themselves to it”. Anselm, we are told by the historian R.W. Southern, expressed a very warm, perhaps “passionate” desire for the company of beloved friends but he “regarded these expressions of love as having nothing in common with sodomy”. LGBT Catholics should follow his example.

PIERS PAUL READ
LONDON W12

● Hilmar Pabel’s response (Letters, 23 March) to your 16 March editorial suggests that homosexual persons can accept, through the spirituality and fellowship of the Courage apostolate, that their sexual orientation is “not according to plan”. This raises the question: with whose plan is their orientation not in accord?

The odd conclusion will be that homosexual persons are invited to be at peace with the conundrum that their sexual orientation is not in accord with the plan of the God who created them with that orientation. It is small wonder that most gay Catholics choose to reject such philosophical niceties and embrace their orientation as a gift, rather than a problem.

BRENDAN McMULLAN
SHEFFIELD

● Many readers will no doubt be persuaded by the suavely reasonable tone of your

editorial about gay Catholics.

I imagine that the time will come, if it has not already come, when gay Christians, including Catholics, will advocate that the Bible should be thoroughly revised and that a more gay-friendly version should be produced. Whole sections would of course be omitted, notably Genesis 19:1-29 and Romans 1:24-32; and words of Our Lord such as Mark 9:43-48 would be radically altered.

Would *The Tablet* lend its support to this enterprise?
(PROF.) DAVID JOWITT
JOS, NIGERIA

Awe-inspiring thinker

● It was good to see the centenary of the birth of Elizabeth Anscombe marked in your last issue (“Firm intentions”, 23 March). However, two corrections are necessary.

In my piece I stated that Elizabeth had arranged for her body to be buried beside Wittgenstein’s. I have now been reliably informed that the arrangement was made not by Elizabeth herself but by her family after her death.

In his contribution, John Haldane says that the point of Anscombe’s work on intention was to prevent people shirking responsibility for unintended consequences of their actions. In fact, her influence worked in

TOPIC OF THE WEEK

Last bastion of outdated patriarchy

I WHOLEHEARTEDLY agree with Sir Edward Leigh MP, who stated in his letter to Pope Francis (News from Britain and Ireland, 23 March) that “root and branch reform” is needed in the Church to counter the “widespread disillusion” felt by many Catholics. Vatican II stated that the laity should become more involved in the running of the Church. I believe that lay participation with both men and women having equal authority with the hierarchy is necessary, if the Church is to have credibility with future generations.

The present scandals have not damaged my faith, but I worry for my grandchildren

and their contemporaries. They are too young to understand what is going on now, but they will in the future. I was of the generation that had to struggle for equality for women; my granddaughter will never know anything but equality, so how is she going to accept that only men will make the decisions that will guide her spiritual and moral life? Even her brother will find it anachronistic; patriarchy is way out of date. I want their simple faith to grow into a mature faith in the Catholic Church, but if things stay as they are that may not happen.

GAIL BROWN

KIDDERMINSTER, WORCESTERSHIRE

the opposite direction. At the time when she wrote, most philosophers and legal theorists held agents responsible for the foreseen consequences of their actions. They did so by accepting (following Jeremy Bentham) the identification of intention with foresight. Anscombe’s work brought out that there was more to intention than mere foresight, so that something might be foreseen and yet be unintentional. (A toper, for instance, foresees but does not intend his hangover.)

Anscombe’s distinction made room for the doctrine of double effect, according to which, if an act has both good and bad effects, it may be permissible so long as the evil effect is not itself intended. This doctrine was long ridiculed by utilitarians, but has been upheld by most Catholic moralists.

(SIR) ANTHONY KENNY
OXFORD

● The reflections on the life of the philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe by John Haldane and Anthony Kenny brought to my mind her seminars in the late 1970s on Aristotle with Gwilym Owen, conducted in his Cambridge rooms overlooking King’s College Chapel.

Her attention to detail was awe-inspiring: over two years we studied just a few pages of

Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. Looking now at my marginal notes made in the text some 40 years ago, I see that her insights regarding classical Greek ideas of substance, matter and form were formidable – insights which, had I understood them better at the time, would have sharpened considerably my own work in the philosophy of physics. However, my memories may not be entirely accurate, given that glasses of scotch often appeared during the course of our deliberations.
(DR) CHRISTOPHER RAY
DIDSBURY, MANCHESTER

Reasonable doubts

● Given the legal distinction of so many fellows of All Souls down the centuries it is a surprise to read a letter from that college written in apparent ignorance of such facts as that court convictions are not always just and juries not always unprejudiced.

Fr Frank Brennan (“Truth and justice in an Australian court”, 2 March) outlines “the inherent contradictions and improbabilities” of the prosecution case against Cardinal George Pell.

In response Katherine Backler (Letters, 9 March) offers outrage at the suggestion that there might have been a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

miscarriage of justice. In her view a witness for the prosecution must always be believed. She is indignant that the alleged victim in this case has been doubted.

What does she suppose the role of a defence counsel to be? And would she wish prosecution witnesses to go unquestioned if she were to find herself in the dock?

C.D.C. ARMSTRONG
BELFAST

Deadly robots

● While the difference between robots and human beings makes for an interesting discussion, (“Is there anybody there?”, 9 March) this may not be where the real issue lies. Artificial intelligence and robots will change society both for better and for worse.

Work has already begun on defining ethical standards for AI and robots, with input from stakeholders including business, academia and NGOs. How will such ethical standards attribute a value to a human life, and how will this affect how its value is perceived?

The military applications of AI are concerning, as they are likely to be developed without reference to international standards. The killing of human beings by an AI-controlled Lethal Autonomous Weapons System is the AI warfare

nightmare. An AI arms race is a real possibility, a point recently raised by Henry Kissinger.

So, the question is not so much whether or not we are different from robots, but what we are we going to do about the negative side of the impact they are likely to have on us.

TIMOTHY MURPHY
TWICKENHAM, MIDDLESEX

Bishops don't get it

● Letters on 16 March commented on a pastoral letter from Archbishop Leo Cushley of St Andrews and Edinburgh about child abuse. At the beginning of Advent, Catholics in Southwark received a similar letter from their archbishop, Peter Smith. Like Archbishop Cushley he presented a case that child abuse is a problem in society at large and that most abuse happens in the family context. He went on to describe how the work of the Nolan and Cumberlege reviews resulted in the introduction of national safeguarding procedures for implementation in every diocese in England and Wales.

As with Archbishop Cushley, there was no attempt at an apology for the failure of those in charge to deal with cases of child abuse. It is the cover-up by the hierarchy that upsets so many Catholics, and our bishops don't seem to “get it”.

JENNY CAIRNS
LONDON SW19

● The question is not why some priests have abused children, but why paedophiles become priests. An active paedophile needs a position of trust, status, authority and access to children.

The priesthood has provided these, in all-male boarding schools and large orphanages, and in access to altar boys and choir boys at times when women were excluded from the sanctuary, the sacristy and the choir room.

At one time bishops would not have known that paedophilia is a psychiatric disorder (now so defined by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*) and could presume that these were individual lapses for which a man could repent.

The priesthood should be made less attractive to sexual predators of any kind, with strong safeguarding procedures, less clericalism and more lay administration in parishes and protection of the priest from individual contact with a child, for his own safety as well as the child's.

The laity too must not “cover up”. I knew a man who said there was sexual abuse in his monastic boarding school, but hadn't told his family because they “wouldn't have believed” him.

The teaching that one must not have uncharitable thoughts or judge anyone may need to be

redefined in that it does not refer to criminal acts.

ANGELA EDWARDS
CARDIFF

The end of Lent

● John Fryer (Letters, 23 March) supports Melanie McDonagh's preference for the Ash Wednesday message of “Remember you are dust and to dust you will return.” May I put in a preference for “Repent and believe in the Good News”? These words are, after all, in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, the way Jesus opens his public ministry. While it may concentrate the mind to remember that death awaits us all, the journey through Lent is a journey to life. The Good News is that we are reunited with the Risen Christ, that death is not our final end.

JOAN DOYLE GRIFFITH
LONDON N19

Glasgow humour

● I take issue with Julia Langdon's declaration that *The Daily Telegraph's* Matt Pritchett is the most brilliant exponent of the modern art of lampooning (“The funny side of Brexit”, 23 March). Stephen Camley's daily cartoons in *The Herald* (Glasgow) surpass anything I have seen in recent times in the English mainstream papers.

VINCENT O'DONNELL
GLASGOW

THE LIVING SPIRIT

AND LITURGICAL CALENDAR

Pope Francis is clear that Lenten and lifelong conversion “asks everything of us”. Conversion asks for change in mind, heart and even body, perhaps even to the extent of losing our lives. However, Pope Francis is equally clear that conversion will not cost happiness, will not cheat us of human fulfilment. Happiness hinges on holiness. True human happiness needs the healing and hope that holiness holds out; holiness helps us become fully human. Offering everything is not one option among others but an opening of our minds, hearts and bodies to truth, love and wholeness. The goal of conversion is communion with God and others. Repentance is a turning towards holiness, returning

to receive “the happiness for which we were created”. Holiness is the hallmark of authentic happiness.

KEVIN O'GORMAN SMA
FROM *JOURNEYING IN JOY AND GLADNESS: LENT & HOLY WEEK WITH GAUDETE ET EXULTATE* (MESSENGER PUBLICATIONS, 2019)

“Not my will but yours” is perhaps the most powerful statement in the history of Christianity. Jesus' entire life and ministry can be summarised in this one phrase. Here is an attitude that makes others central in our life. If the focus on the other vanishes, Christianity loses its relevance and so does the Christian ministry of reconciliation. I often think that, to understand the decline of Christianity today, we need do no more than



focus on when, where and how we have lost the centrality of the ‘other’ in relation to ourselves.

MUTHURAJ SWAMY
FROM *RECONCILIATION* (SPCK, 2018)

We bishops don't give orders as if we were despots. It shouldn't be that way. The bishop is the most humble servant of the community because Christ told the apostles, the first bishops, “The one who wants to be greatest among you, become the least, be the servant of all” (Mark 10:43). Our mandate is service. Our behaviour, our word, is service.

ST OSCAR ROMERO
FROM *THROUGH THE YEAR WITH OSCAR ROMERO*, TRANS. IRENE B. HODGSON (DARTON, LONGMAN & TODD, 2006)

◆ CALENDAR ◆

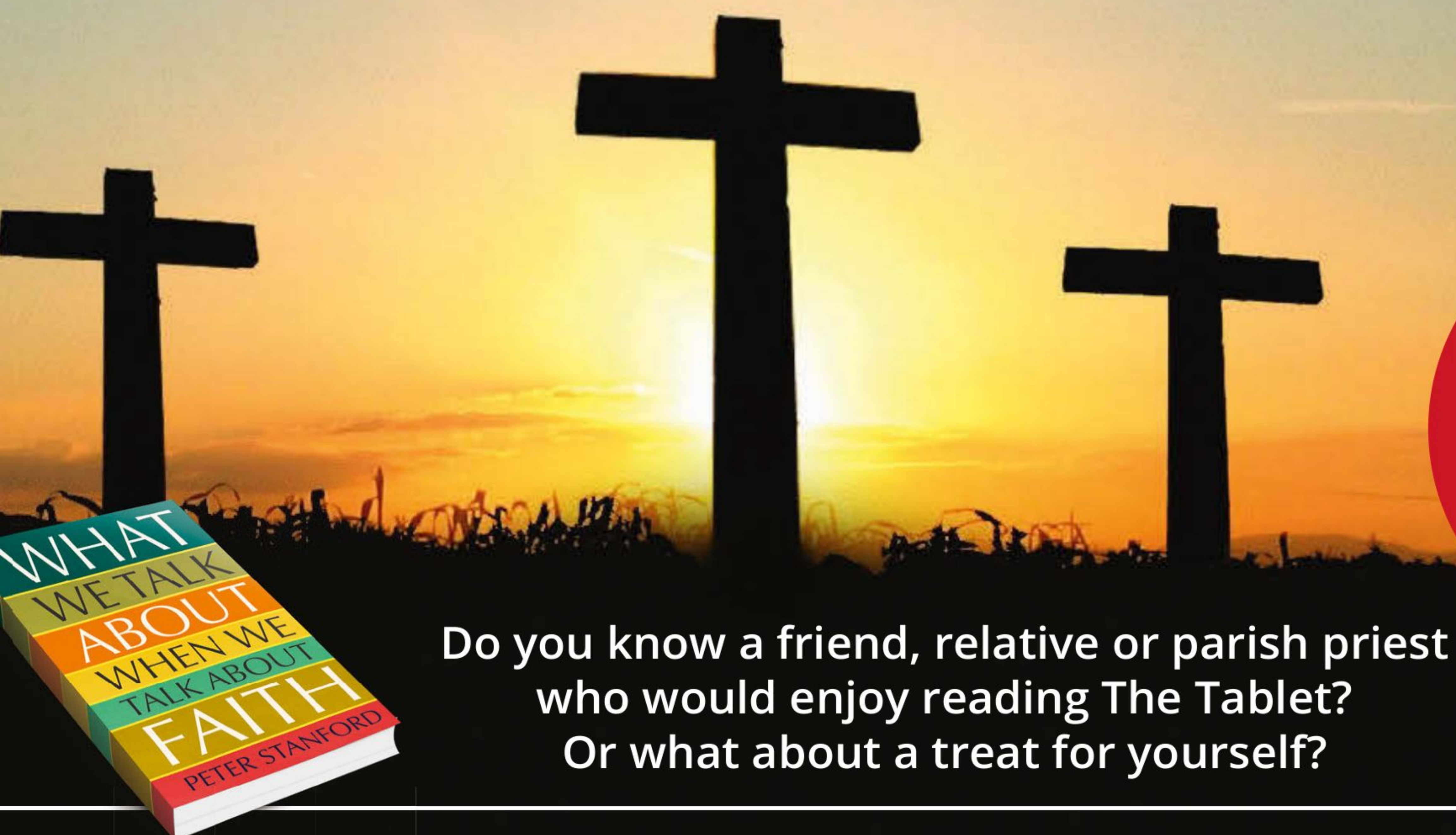
31 March:
Fourth Sunday of Lent
(Laetare Sunday) (Year C)
Monday 1 April:
Lent feria
Tuesday 2 April:
Lent feria
(St Francis of Paola, Hermit)
Wednesday 3 April:
Lent feria
Thursday 4 April:
Lent feria
(St Isidore, Bishop and Doctor)
Friday 5 April:
Lent feria
(St Vincent Ferrer, Priest)
Saturday 6 April:
Lent feria
7 April:
Fifth Sunday of Lent



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Map-reading versus multitasking

Are men and women's brains differently wired?

CHARLIE McCANN

The Gendered Brain

GINA RIPPON

(BODLEY HEAD, 448 PP, £20)

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IN THE SUMMER of 2017, a peeved engineer at Google, James Damore, circulated a memo in which he explained why the company's efforts to hire more female engineers were misguided. "The distribution of preferences and abilities of men and women differ in part due to biological causes," he wrote. "These differences may explain why we don't see equal representation of women in tech and leadership."

The memo led to Damore's dismissal from Google, but it resonated with many. The idea that the sexes have different abilities, behaviour and interests thanks to their distinct biologies has a long history. Victorian scientists tried to prove that women were intellectually inferior to men by demonstrating that their brains were smaller. Modern scientists have discarded the outright sexism of their forebears, but many have held fast to the premise behind their skull measurements: that the male brain is wired differently from the female brain. This explains why, as psychologists over the last 50 years have argued, men are better at reading maps and women are better at multitasking;

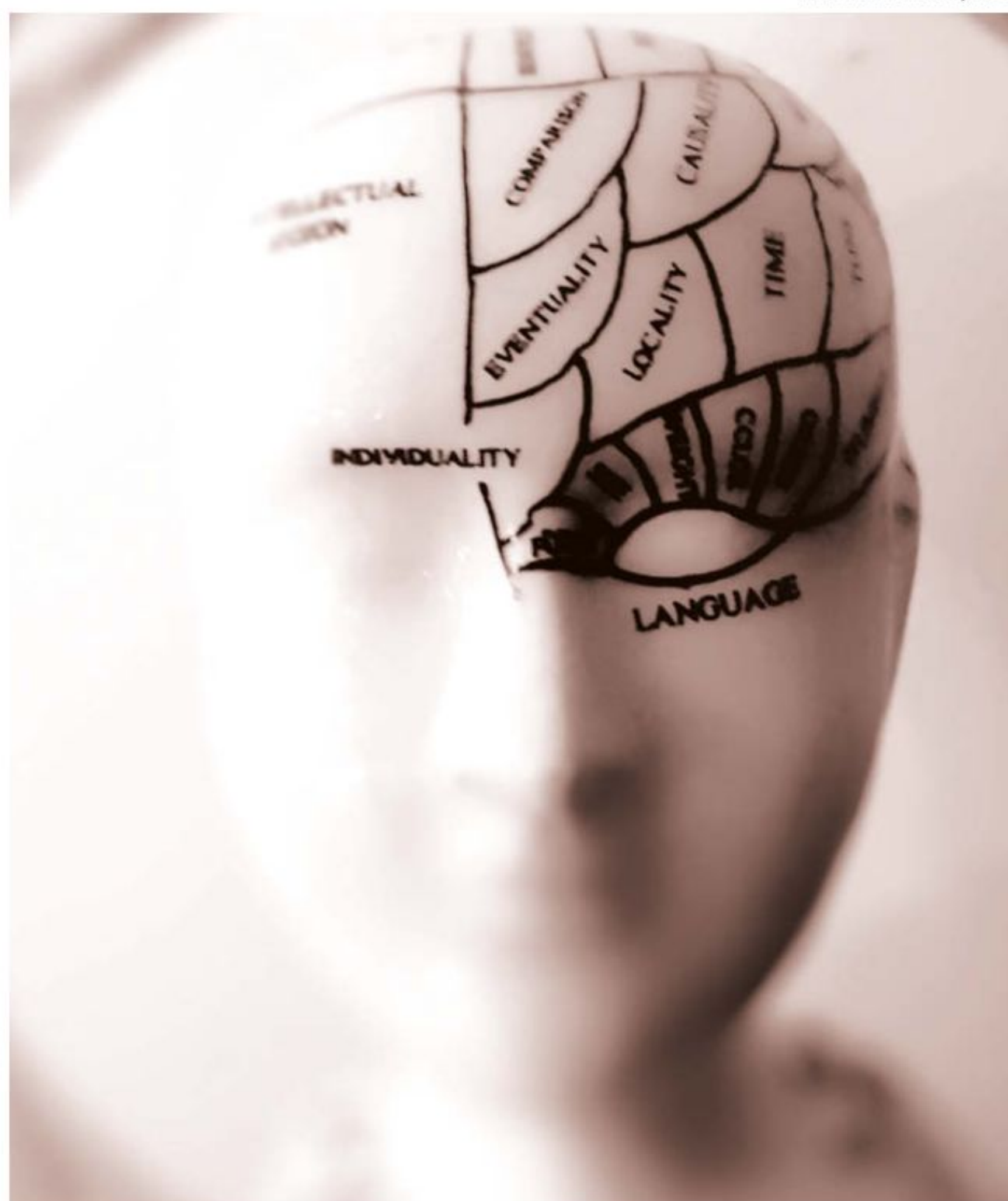


PHOTO: PEXELS, MEO

why men are better at systematising and women are better at empathising; why men are more interested in things and women more interested in people. Women just don't have what it takes to be coders. Google's efforts to hire more female engineers is a waste of time.

NOT SO, declares Gina Rippon, a cognitive neuroscientist at Aston University in Birmingham. In *The Gendered Brain*, she traces how much of the science underpinning the theory of the sexed brain has been misinterpreted, misused or is in itself sexist. Writing in a cheerful, no-nonsense style, she draws on a dizzying array of studies to conclude, rather thrillingly, that the premise underpinning over 150 years of scientific endeavour is plain wrong.

She begins at the very beginning, with the brains of infants. If our grey matter can really be colour coded "pink" and "blue", we should be able to demonstrate this when we are fresh from the womb. Yet a consensus has emerged over the last several years that there are very few, if any, structural differences in the brain at birth, and no evidence of differences in cognition – male babies are no better than their sisters at learning or reasoning about objects and their motions. But if there is little to distinguish the male from the female brain at birth, why is the global community of science researchers more than two-thirds male? The answer can be found in something

Rippon calls "the social brain". It turns out that the brain is a bit like the new kid at school: it desperately wants to fit in with the group it identifies as the "in crowd". So it immediately begins to study the laws governing society and its rules of engagement so that it can better navigate social interactions. To avoid being overwhelmed by the sheer diversity of *Homo sapiens*, the brain relies on stereotypes, which provide speedy access to a slew of expectations about how any given person might look and behave. The brain then internalises these neural short cuts, so that it understands how to fit in with "people like us".

CHILDREN QUICKLY realise that society expects them to think and behave like other members of their sex. Girls may learn, from their Barbie dolls and other "pink" toys, that they are better suited to fashion or caregiving than to the life of the mind. Such sentiments can be shrugged away as outdated clichés, but these ideas have the power to lodge in our brains, no matter what our age, and change them. When somebody is told that their social group lacks the aptitude for a particular academic subject, that individual is likely to perform less well at that subject than they would have if they'd been told the opposite. Nine-year-old girls evaluated in one study didn't think that they were any good at maths, a subject they identified with boys, even though their grades were as good as the boys' in their class.

Exposure to negative stereotypes activates a part of the brain that deals with emotional processing rather than the area that does sums. The brains of those girls are effectively telling them that they do not belong to the group of people who excel at maths. This message hurts: social rejection activates the same areas of the brain as physical pain. To avoid reliving such humiliation, studies show that women's brains often inhibit any thoughts, feelings and actions that they think might lead to rejection. Effectively, they silence themselves.

So the reason that there are more male than female engineers at Google is not that men are superior at computer science, but that society rewires our brains into thinking they are. Rippon makes a convincing case. I hope Damore buys her book.

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SPEED READING



MARKIE ROBSON-SCOTT

loves three
debut novels

In *A Perfect Explanation* (Salt, £12.99; *Tablet* price £11.69), Eleanor Anstruther fictionalises her own family history with exceptional skill. In 1924, her aristocratic grandmother, Enid Campbell, left her husband and small children for two years. When she returns, she brings chaos and misunderstanding. But Anstruther finds the disturbed woman beneath the “brute”, and creates a wonderful portrait of a mother who gave up her children because, in an era when post-natal depression wasn’t understood, she felt too evil to hold on to them.

In Laura Legge’s *Cala* (Head of Zeus, £18.99; *Tablet* price £17.09), set in the Outer Hebrides, four women are closeted in a farmhouse, with a harsh regime imposed by their witchy leader – no electricity, a freezing outhouse, bitter tinctures, no contact with the outside. But 18-year-old Euna rebels after meeting Aram, an unreliable, attractive fisherman, and runs away, finding companionship on an odyssey to Glasgow in a campervan. It’s a magical picture of the strength of women’s friendship, and Legge’s language is startlingly original.

Spare, elegant and effective, *The Ghost Factory* by Jenny McCartney (Fourth Estate, £12.99; *Tablet* price £11.69) features Belfast and the “drab shawl” of the Troubles. Although sectarian killing’s grown stale after 25 years, Titch is brutally attacked by paramilitaries because he stole Jaffa Cakes from the wrong shopkeeper. After Jacky slugs one of them in a pub as revenge, he has to flee Belfast. Although London ends up treating him well, the wounds from the years of violence can never completely heal.



‘History is as much
his subject as frogs
and diving beetles’

Wildness and wet

ISABEL LLOYD

Still Water: The Deep Life of the Pond

JOHN LEWIS-STEMPEL

(DOUBLEDAY, 304 PP, £14.99)

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PONDS aren’t natural. Or at least not often, not in Britain. They form easily enough, when water collects in bogs, sinkholes and the like, but the law of succession means they slowly fill up with the sludge of leaf-fall, topsoil and the dead tissue of aquatic organisms. Eventually trees invade and the pond is done for. Most of the 470,000 ponds that scatter our countryside are human-made and human-maintained, dug out over the centuries for purposes from protective (moats) to agricultural (watering holes for cattle).

Unfortunately what man maketh, man also taketh away, as the nature writer John Lewis-Stempel points out early in this amiable, affectionate book of what he calls “pond praise and plea”. British ponds are the often polluted and ignored survivors of a post-war massacre, when the demands of intensive agriculture and urbanisation meant at least half were drained, filled in or otherwise finished off. This is a voyage round the remnants.

His trips take him to ponds of all types and moods. He pauses to watch moorhens squabbling on the concrete ramp of a walled Parisian boating pond; picks his way through garbage to the edge of abandoned medieval fishponds; dangles his feet in the calm of a Byronically romantic millpond; and takes his binoculars down to Slimbridge’s decoy ponds, used in the duck-greedy seventeenth century to trap and kill birds in their thousands. He finds something to celebrate at most of them, but is best delighted when he finds a father and son paying homage to a heron, at a pond where the poet Edward Thomas played as a boy.

Children’s relationship with ponds has a large role in the book. For generations they were central sites for play and early, igniting experiences of the natural world: fishing for sticklebacks with a bent pin, scooping up tadpoles in a jar, splashing about in Wellingtons and getting a “booty” of green water for your pains. These days when the author spends an hour at school drop-off time by a city-centre duckpond, not one child stops to throw bread.

When not having ponds act as a metaphor for our degraded relationship with nature, Lewis-Stempel uses them as lenses through which to view the past. History is as much his subject as frogs and diving beetles, with ponds Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Tudor and modern fitted together into a watery jigsaw of cultural development, ownership and exploitation. Medieval kings used pond rushes to sweeten their bedchambers; Romans dug out fishponds to show off. Having a labour-intensive, stone-lined and exactly geometrical fishpond in front of your villa was, it seems, the third-century AD equivalent of putting in a basement gym.

This millefeuille of history, cultural and natural, is layered over seasonal visits to the author’s own pond on his farm in Herefordshire, beginning with the fog-bound, dead-seeming days of winter. Dutifully he records the water’s slow rise into life, even on occasion swimming in it. There’s less to describe here than in his earlier, award-winning *Meadowland*, but his poet’s eye keeps the whole enterprise afloat. Every few pages, an image hooks you like a trout on a fly: an autumn wind makes willow leaves “shoal to show their silver underbellies”; sheep in a snowstorm retreat “to the lee of the hedge, to stand like disconsolate spectators at football”. His passion for protecting nature resonates throughout. “I am happy,” Lewis-Stempel says after seeing the teeming, life-rich health of Edward Thomas’ playground pond, “because Thomas died at Arras in 1917 for Adlestrop, and scenes like these. We are only required to keep them.”

MUSIC FOR THE MIND AND SOUL, Bridgewater Hall, Manchester (31 March) • WILD ROSE, directed by Tom Harper (in cinemas 12 April)

ALL MY SONS, Old Vic, London (previews from 13 April) • VUILLARD: THE POETRY OF EVERYDAY LIFE, Holburne Museum, Bath (opens 24 May)

PHOTO: MICHAEL BROSILOW

Matilda Ziegler
as Em and Tim
Hopper as Andy

A sin so deadly

Can a paedophile get to heaven? That's the question at the heart of a new play at the National Theatre

By MARK LAWSON

THE DIALOGUE in *Downstate*, the latest play at the National Theatre (until 27 April), is sharp and thoughtful – but the set and props are, unusually for a theatre production, almost equally eloquent, teasingly revealing their full meaning throughout the two hours.

Waiting for the lights to go down, we see, on the open stage, what looks like an institutional room of some kind: cheap table and chairs, a year planner on the wall, a little kitchen visible off. A school, hospital or business staff room, perhaps?

And yet, if so, there are no personal lockers, the obligatory furniture of a time defined by concerns over privacy and protection. And why, although the programme declares “the time is the present”, is the only phone a brick-like old landline handset? In 2019, would there really be no cellphones or tablets lying around?

Our sense of when and where we are is further blurred by other features of Todd Rosenthal's design: a baseball bat beside the main door, a broken window roughly covered with cardboard, and a cantilevered dividing security door-wall, which suggests a sort of prison.

Which, the first moments of Bruce Norris' *Downstate* quickly makes clear, this is. The opening tableau could further misdirect the unknowing. Fred (Francis Guinan), the twinkly old guy in a wheelchair, might just be the dad or grandpa – living in sheltered accommodation – of one half of the thirtysomething couple sitting on the sofa. But then who reads to a relative from a prepared text, as Andy (Tim Hopper) is doing? And which visitor to an old folks' home then announces that they have come “to tell you to your face that you are a fundamentally evil person”?

THE TENSE, disturbing setting of *Downstate*, brought to London by Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre, is a “group home” for convicted child sex offenders, now out of jail, but with their names still on the danger register, and electronic tags on their ankles. Fred, a retired piano teacher – rarely has the simple mention of a profession sent such a shiver of, in two senses, apprehension through a theatre – is billeted with Dee (K. Todd Freeman), a theatre worker who predated on juvenile actors; Felix (Eddie Torres), prevented by court order from contacting his daughter; and Gio (Glenn

Davis), considering himself a lesser offender than the others, due to a misunderstanding over the birth date of a schoolgirl he met. Andy, a victim of one of the men, has come to negotiate a “reconciliation contract”, an impact statement that the offender must sign as an admission of guilt.

The broken window and baseball bat suddenly make sense: seen as a risk to locals, the housemates are under threat from them. They have no smartphones nor internet access because it is a condition of their release to live in digital abstinence. However, newer communication devices do intrude on the action, serving the purpose of a gun shown to the audience in Ibsen or Chekhov.

FOR UNDERSTANDABLE reasons of queasiness over acting out such abhorrent behaviour, even in the context of dramatic pretence, theatre plays dealing directly with child sex abuse are far fewer than those treating other currently overwhelming news stories, such as climate change or Brexit.

Even the works that there have been tend to tackle the matter obliquely. Mike Sheath's *Crossing the Line* (2016) is the monologue of a woman whose husband is arrested after police monitoring of a child abuse website. Jennifer Haley's *The Nether* (2015) used the distancing of virtual reality, set largely in a digital fantasy world, where people's avatars act out transgressive fantasies. Sayan Kent's *The Predator* (2015) and *Scarborough* (2008) by Fiona Evans both explored relationships between teachers and teenage pupils which, though ethically and legally unacceptable, would be placed by most in a different category from the violation of a young child.

Presciently, two much earlier plays directly featured guilty Catholic priests: Mart Crowley's *For Reasons that Remain Unclear* (1993), a confrontation between abuser and victim that I enthusiastically reviewed here last summer, and Ronald Harwood's *J.J. Farr* (1987), set at a house for priests undergoing varieties of retreat and rehab. *Downstate* shares territory with those plays, and also with Bryony Lavery's recently West End-revived *Frozen* (1998), in which a serial paedophile killer addresses the audience directly, raising the possibility that he is “grooming” us towards his viewpoint.

Norris' characters are not murderers, which deliberately makes them more plausible candidates for forgiveness and social reintegration. Nor is any of them a prelate, although, crucially, the group house is run by a Lutheran church: the state will extend no charity to these ex-convicts, so the Church must. And Felix and Gio, having joined bible study groups in jail, have crucifixes on necks or walls, and are prone to pray or quote scripture in moments of stress.

That aspect of the characters serves two purposes. It is reportorially the case that a



DIGITAL ARTS **Brazil: The Warriors of the Amazon** The gun-carrying scientists protecting the rainforest www.tinyurl.com/tabletdigitalarts

significant percentage of criminals, including sex offenders, reaffirm or convert to religious belief in jail. This phenomenon is troubling, in different ways, to believers and non-believers, who both find the referral of the crime to a divine court of appeal potentially too convenient. “The Lord says,” one of the paedophiles begins a sentence to a civilian, who replies: “Can we leave the Lord out of this?”

Except, which is explicitly the second purpose of the theological sub-theme, we can’t entirely. Some Catholics point out, when faced with the scale of sexual abuse in their and other Christian Churches, that there have been similar scandals in non-religious (possibly even irreligious) establishments, such as the BBC, the NHS, Hollywood and sport.

But, as Norris’ play understands, the question of whether abusers can be forgiven arises far more critically in a Church than a football club or TV light entertainment department, as those other abusing institutions were not founded on the possibility of contrition and redemption. A teacher at my Catholic school used to structure classes around the classic theological conundrum of whether Adolph Hitler could have been forgiven by God and admitted to heaven.

CHALLENGING us with the question of the circumstances in which forgiveness might be given, Norris subjects the issue of expiation to the 360-degree intelligent interrogation that is the signature of the script.

In two exceptionally chilling scenes, it becomes clear that Fred lacks the “firm purpose of amendment” that is a condition of absolution. These moments, involving subtle changes of voice and manner from Guinan, also solve one of the biggest problems of this subject in theatre, which is how to dramatise pederastic behaviour without giving satisfaction or tactics to child abusers, and trauma to those who have experienced abuse.

Norris’ plays specialise in jokes that test the boundaries of taste. His *Clybourne Park* (2010), a play about race relations, contains the only single line that I have ever seen cause audience members to walk out. There are also some gasp-inducing phrases, and much scatological language, in *Downstate*.

So I have no doubt that the play would make gruelling (perhaps even unbearable) viewing for victims of abuse, or other very sensitive theatregoers. But, as there has clearly been sufficient publicity to prevent anyone encountering the subject matter unawares, the staging of the play could only be objected to by those who accept, which I simply can’t, that one section of the population should be allowed to prevent any exploration of issues that those most directly affected find upsetting. *Downstate* is a deeply serious consideration of the processes, religious and secular, of forgiveness and redemption.



Jenna Coleman as Victoria and Kate Fleetwood as Feodora

TELEVISION

Pompous circumstances

Latest series shows how historical drama is really about us, not them

LUCY LETHBRIDGE

Victoria
ITV

IT’S 1848, the Year of Revolutions, with crowned heads toppling all over Europe; will the British monarchy also fall to the mob? That’s the question at the heart of the third series of the ITV hit drama about the life of Queen Victoria, which began this week (24 March). And just in case the viewer might have missed the point, episode one was titled “Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears the Crown”.

The first two series of *Victoria* enjoyed soaring ratings and some critical acclaim. The luminously pretty Jenna Coleman as Victoria is both likeable and watchable. She doesn’t sound very, well, Victorian, with her flattened, modern voice – but then she is given lines like “I will miss you soooooo much”; “Is that a problem?” and “Promise me you’ll take care”; which would sound anachronistic in any other kind of voice.

For the armchair pedant in the mood to throw objects at the screen there is much to relish in *Victoria*. Personally, I found the sudden bouts of running, running, running through woods and gardens a bit strange, especially in crinolines. And why did Victoria never seem to wear a coat outside, even in winter? I am assuming it’s because it would interfere with the viewer’s enjoyment of her heaving bosom – though there may be a sound historical reason for it.

Anyway, there are gorgeous costumes and CGI pageant-of-English-history-style painted backdrops and loads of Events crammed in, even if their historical accuracy might not bear scrutiny. Purists were annoyed in series one that not only was Prime Minister Lord

Melbourne – who would have been fat and 60 at the Queen’s succession in 1837 – played by swoonsomely Byronic Rufus Sewell, but that his relationship to the Queen was sexed up: they were a romantic couple, Victoria the spirited teenage rebel and Melbourne the empathetic proto-liberal, both bravely taking on the Tory Establishment (boo hiss).

In series two, the Queen juggled motherhood, monarchy and post-natal depression while Prince Albert (an excellent Tom Hughes) prowled the corridors chafing at the bit. Series three opens with Victoria heavily pregnant with her sixth child – but looking not one minute older than she looked at 17. Will Coleman eventually have to wear a fat suit? Victoria in middle age had a 50-inch waist. The court is still seething with sexual intrigue, both gay and straight, and the parallel plot involving the household staff meanders on engagingly, with Victoria’s personal maid neatly encapsulating any concern we might have about the social position of women.

In swaggers Lord Palmerston, the new foreign secretary (Laurence Fox). A womaniser and populist, he says things like “The British public is like a beautiful woman and I wish to glory in her smiles.” What a sleazeball. The Chartists are on the move, the French king, Louis Philippe, and Victoria’s half-sister, Princess Feodora, take refuge at Buckingham Palace, and it looks rather as though, despite a distinctly frosty reception, they’ll never leave.

Victoria is beginning to look as if it’s being written by committee. Its strenuous expositions are wearisome and impede the drama. But perhaps it’s no longer entirely sure what kind of entertainment it is – *Downton Abbey* or docudrama? Would a seamstress really have found her way into the Queen’s bedroom and given her a lecture on workers’ rights and suffrage reform? With its black Chartists, “woke” women and obvious messages about social equality, the series says a lot more about 2019 than the mid nineteenth century. But then isn’t the really fascinating thing, in the end, about television historical dramas that they’re far more about us than them?

PHOTO: ITV/MAMOTH SCREEN

MUSIC

On the very edge of jazz

Three extraordinary new albums

BRIAN MORTON

One Day Band 17 – Evelyn Glennie
and Roly Porter

TRESTLE DL

Sult – Maja Ratkje

RUNE GRAMMOFON

Shamania – Marilyn Mazur

RARENOISERECORDS

DAME EVELYN Glennie booked a permanent place for herself in the pages of Sir James MacMillan's magnificent percussion concerto, *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel*, which she premiered 25 years ago, and which has figured strongly again – this time under Colin Currie's capable hands – in MacMillan's sixtieth birthday celebrations. And yet, one shouldn't be misled by the titles, or the big retrospectives, for neither MacMillan nor Glennie shows any desire to slip into the armchair role of "establishment artist".

The percussionist has recently worked on a movie soundtrack, *Altamira*, with Mark Knopfler; teamed up with Edinburgh-based jazz group Trio HLK; and has now shown an even more experimental side by recording another ad hoc free improvisation, this time with dubstep producer, Roly Porter. She's not entirely new to this field, having previously worked with the eclectic guitarist, Fred Frith, but *One Day Band 17* (Trestle DL) is an extraordinary thing – a piece of music one not so much listens to as climbs inside, and walks around.

Glennie uses singing bowls associated with Tibetan prayer, as well as timps, waterphones and music boxes. The acoustic sound is strange enough, reminiscent in places of some of



Evelyn Glennie and dubstep producer Roly Porter

David Shire's music for *Return To Oz*, but converted by Porter's production into a huge, cavernous soundspace that somehow naturalises every non-idiomatic attack (like rubbed timpani skins) and makes it seem part of some previously unimagined new orchestral language. Ordinary description rather fails. It's a work to experience with open ears.

Maja Ratkje is an established star of Norwegian composition and also a vocalist and performer of great courage, always happy to let her beautiful delivery go raw or ragged when the drama of a piece calls for it. Her latest release *Sult* (Rune Grammofon) is based on music Ratkje improvised for a new version of Knut Hamsun's 1890 novel, *Hunger*, made for Norwegian National Ballet. In keeping with the book's themes of marginality, she, too, has adapted her instrumentation, learning to play a specially adapted – or augmented –

pump organ during performance, as she intersperses mournful art song with pure sound: creaking bicycles, tuneless street whistling, the swirl of litter. The music is often unsettling, and all the more so for the undisguisable sweetness of Ratkje's voice; but the combination of it and an instrument for which there is no manual and no graded learning curve offers one of the most challenging and compulsively replayable records of the year so far.

Danish percussionist Marilyn Mazur has more often been associated with the "Nordic" aesthetic of the ECM label, but *Shamania* (RareNoise) – which maybe ought to be "Shemania" – brings together another female group, including saxophonist Lotte Anker, to create an astonishingly eclectic, almost theatrical presentation of modern music styles, every one of them different, every one of them combining to make a whole.

RADIO

Dressed to kill

The real price of the fashion industry

D.J. TAYLOR

Costing the Earth

BBC RADIO 4

LUCY SIEGLE, *Costing the Earth's* engaging presenter, began her report on the "Fast Fashion Slow Down" (26 March) at London Fashion Week. Here, beneath the gaze of a vigilant authority ("They've got two riot vans out there if it all kicks off," someone helpfully explained), she could be found cross-questioning members of the environmental ginger group, Extinction Rebellion, and assembling what turned out to be a considerable charge sheet.

Over the next half-hour, incriminating statistics piled up like tea towels at a church

jumble sale. The fashion industry, you will be horrified to learn, currently creates a carbon footprint equal to the combined emissions of the aviation and maritime industries. By 2050 it will probably be responsible for a quarter of all CO₂. Boohoo, 2018's most successful fashion player, makes its money out of selling dresses that can sometimes cost less than their postage.

While happy to concede that they were as keen on the clothes they wore as anyone else, Extinction Rebellion were there to "declare a climate disaster". As to how the desire to dress well might be reconciled with the need to save the planet, Siegle had assembled a wide range of fashion gurus keen to encourage a "toxic and polluting industry" to open a conversation on how best to see off the £2 T-shirt and the £5 hoodie from the Primark shelf.

Mary Creagh MP, who chairs the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, talked about licensing, recycling taxes and not being seen to penalise the cheap high

street brands on which so many consumers rely. "Influencers" discoursed on the influence of social media, while forecasters hazarded that the popularity of renting outfits might ultimately decrease volume sales.

As jargon levels rose ("You're looking at Millennials and Generation Z-ers?"), the most sobering analysis came from veteran designer, Katharine Hamnett. Suggesting that progress was "sluggish", Ms Hamnett named names – Sports Direct and TK Maxx were among those mentioned – and insisted that only legislation (and by implication price increases) would do.

This was an exemplary piece of eco-analysis, at once ominous and hard-hitting but also realistic and nuanced. If there was a gaping hole at its centre, this was the absence of any villains to parade. Not that Lucy Siegle could be blamed for this shortfall. As she dutifully explained, several of the toxic polluters had been invited to state their case and not one of them had taken up the offer.

NEWS BRIEFING

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

Franciscan brother **Peter Tabichi**, 36, is the winner of the \$1 million 2019 Global Teacher award. Tabichi, who teaches Mathematics and Physics at Keriko Mixed Secondary School in Pwani Village, in Nakuru County, Kenya, has been giving 80 per cent of his salary to help students who could not afford uniforms and textbooks. He received the Varkey Foundation award last weekend in Dubai, beating 10,000 teachers from 179 countries. "Africa's young people will no longer be held back by low expectations. Africa will produce scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs whose names will be one day famous in every corner of the world. And girls will be a huge part of this story," he said.



Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz (pictured) last week defended the record of **Pope St John Paul II** on the abuse crisis in the Church. "The emerging opinions that John Paul II was sluggish in guiding the Church's response to the sexual abuse of minors by some clerics are prejudicial and contradict the historical facts," the archbishop emeritus of Krakow, who was a friend and collaborator of the Polish pope, wrote in a 20 March statement.

Capuchin superior killed

The Superior of the Capuchins in Chad and Central African Republic died on 20 March, after being stabbed at Ngaoundere, in the Francophone region of

Cameroon. **Fr Toussaint Zoumalde**, 47, was killed during an overnight stopover while returning to Chad from a training course in Central African Republic. It is suspected that an anti-government rebel group killed him.

In Nigeria, the body of Fr Clement Rapuluchukwu Ugwu was found on 20 March, six days after he was kidnapped from his parish in Enugu State. Two priests in Burkina Faso and neighbouring Niger also disappeared in March.

Ascension Healthcare, the largest Catholic health care network with 151 hospitals in the United States, announced that CEO **Anthony Tersigni** is retiring by the end of the year.

Tersigni's retirement comes after questions were raised about Ascension's decision to close Providence Hospital in Washington, D.C. Providence served a disproportionate share of the city's poor. Concern about closing such hospitals matched other concerns about executive pay at the organisation. In 2015, Tersigni made \$13 million and the year before \$17.6 million, making him the highest paid executive of any non-profit organisation in the country.

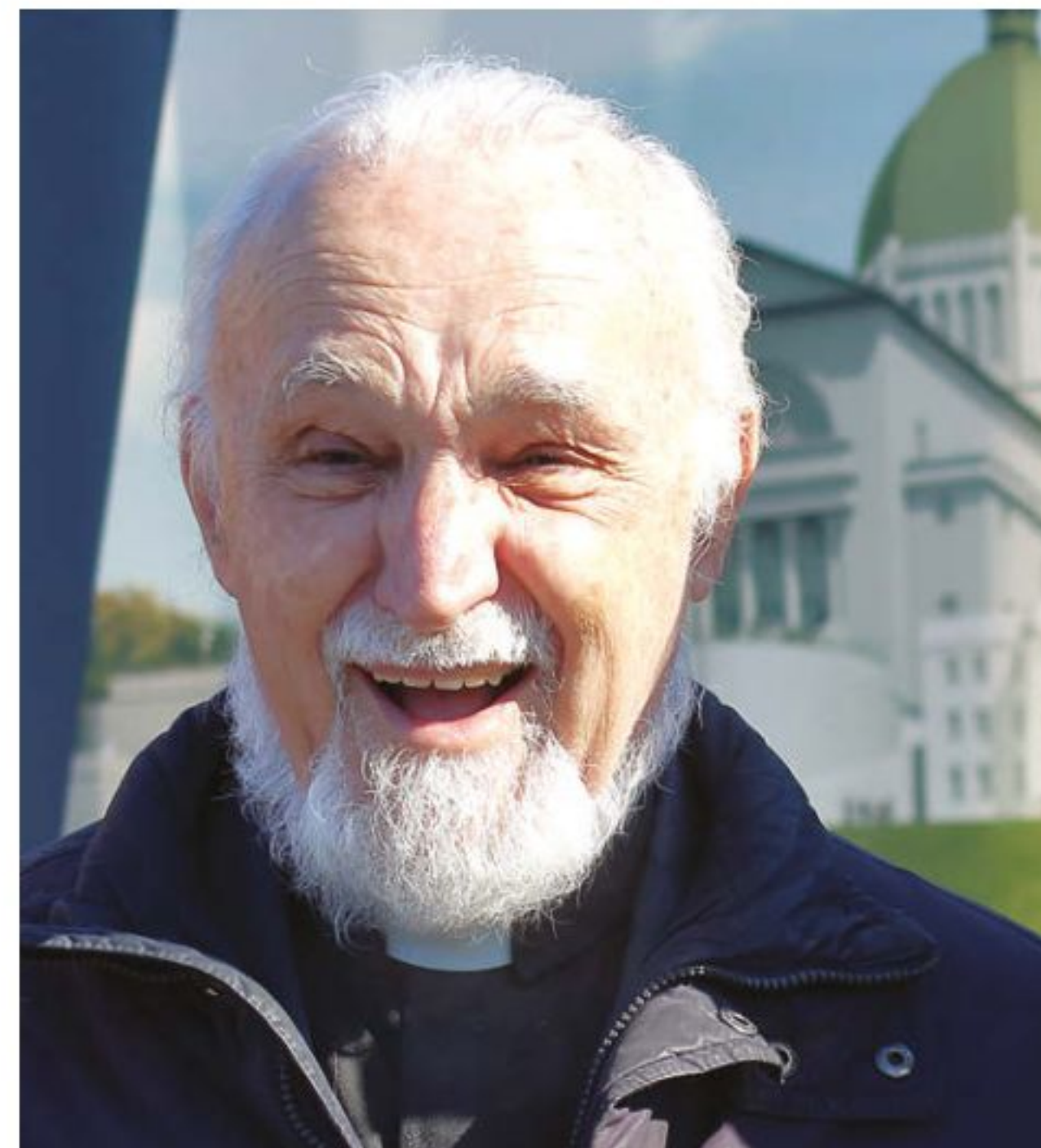
Francis peace plea

Pope Francis called for a peaceful solution to **Nicaragua's** political emergency after last Sunday's Angelus in St Peter's Square. He told the crowd that, "since 27 February Nicaragua has been holding important talks to resolve the serious socio-political crisis in which the country finds itself".

The papal nuncio, Archbishop Waldemar Sommertag, is involved in the mediation process between government and opposition.

A proposed amnesty that would protect perpetrators of crimes during **El Salvador's** bloody civil war from prosecution would violate victims' rights, said Archbishop José Luis Escobar Alas of San Salvador. The peace accords that ended the 1980-1992 civil war created an amnesty for both sides, which was overturned as unconstitutional in 2016.

Archbishop Escobar Alas said the proposed law would re-victimise the victims. Annuling the original amnesty in 2016 allowed Salvadoran authorities to reopen investigations into the assassination of Oscar Romero in 1980, the massacre at El Mozote in 1981 and the 1989 murders of six Jesuits priests.



A 26-year-old man was charged with attempted murder and assault with a deadly weapon last Saturday, the day after the rector at St Joseph's Oratory in **Montreal** was stabbed as he said a morning Mass in Canada's largest church.

Shocked parishioners and a television audience saw a young man rush towards Fr Claude Grou (pictured), chasing him across the altar and striking him at least twice with a weapon in his right hand. Police have not suggested a motive for the attack. The priest, 77, was taken to a hospital. He was released later the same day.

Diocese feeds 1m refugees

The Diocese of Cúcuta in Colombia reported last week that it has provided **Venezuelan refugees** fleeing the political and economic crisis in their country with one million meals. In a statement, the diocese thanked donors and around 800 volunteers who since June 2017 have provided support at the Colombian-Venezuelan border. Fr David Cañas, the coordinator of a diocesan transit house, said that between 3,800 and 4,200 people arrive daily in search of food.

The self-proclaimed Caliphate of the **Islamic State** has been defeated, according to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which have been fighting

the group on the ground in northeastern Syria. In a press release last Saturday, the Syriac Military Council, the main Christian militia in the SDF, announced that, following "the most ferocious battles alongside its Arab and Kurdish partners" over six years, "the total defeat of IS" had been achieved. IS remains a threat, however, Dr Harry Hagopian, a Middle East consultant, told Premier Radio in the UK. "While you eliminate a physical reality, you do not necessarily eliminate the concept from the minds of the peoples who backed this whole Islamic State concept," he said.

Bishop José Ronaldo of Formosa, in central **Brazil**, was detained this week on charges of corruption. Ronaldo and six other priests were accused of diverting money from church collections in the Diocese of Formosa, near Brasilia after \$600,000 (£430,000) went missing from church accounts. The investigation began in 2015. Ronaldo resigned in 2018. He was appointed to the diocese in 2014 by Pope Francis.



Sellers of religious artefacts (above) whose shops line the streets around the sanctuary at **Lourdes** in south-western France are up in arms because the mayor wants them to buy the boutiques they rent at low cost from the town. Mayor Josette Bourdeu said many of the shops badly need renovation but she doesn't have the funds for this. The shopkeepers pay nominal rents – the lowest is €450 a month – under an agreement from 1911 to share out the profits from the flow of pilgrims to the shrine.

Compiled by **James Roberts**.

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“Africa will produce scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs whose names will be one day famous ... And girls will be a huge part of this story.”

Franciscan brother Peter Tabichi, winner of the Varkey Foundation's \$1 million Global Teacher award for 2019. (See page 23)



MOROCCO / Proselytism prosecution loses case

Pope sets out to consolidate progress with Muslim world

CHRISTOPHER LAMB,
TOM HENEGHAN
and ELLEN TEAGUE

POPE FRANCIS arrives in Morocco today for a two-day trip to the mainly Muslim country in another attempt to build up co-operation between Christianity and Islam.

Francis is the second pope to visit the North African kingdom, following in the footsteps of Pope St John Paul II's historic trip to Morocco in 1985, when he became the first pope to address a group of young Muslims.

Francis' trip to Morocco is the third in a triptych of visits to Islamic countries, including Egypt in 2017 and the United Arab Emirates in February this year.

The 82-year-old pope has prioritised building links with the Muslim world, which has seen him repairing previously fractured relations between the Holy See and Cairo. In Abu Dhabi, he signed a landmark agreement with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar



POPE FRANCIS
SERVANT OF HOPE
MOROCCO 2019 المغرب

on how Catholics and Muslims can work more closely together.

Francis has repeatedly rejected the idea of a clash of civilisations between a Christian West and Muslim East. While condemning acts of extremist violence, he has sought to de-link terrorist acts carried out by fundamentalists from the Muslim faith.

The Pope is flying into Rabat today where he will start his trip with a meeting with Moroccan people and the country's civic

authorities. He will visit King Mohammed VI, whose family claims to be descended from the Prophet Muhammad, and then meet Muslim leaders.

In the evening, the Pope plans to take part in a gathering of migrants at the headquarters of the local Caritas agency.

The following day, Francis will visit a social services centre in the coastal city of Témara, south of Rabat, before meeting priests, religious and an ecumenical delegation. He will have lunch with Morocco's bishops before saying Mass at a local sports arena before he returns to Rome on Sunday evening.

Morocco is considered one of the most stable and tolerant countries in the Sunni Islamic world. As a result, the Pope is unlikely to underline the need for the protection of minorities and of religious freedom.

Just before he arrived in Morocco, a court acquitted a Christian accused of proselytism for having given a Muslim "books about the Gospels".

A judge in Taza, east of Fez in northern Morocco, called the Gospels "heavenly books" and quoted the Qu'ran in upholding the Christian's right to religious freedom.

The case began last year when a Muslim brought a case against the Christian, citing a law that demands six months to three years in jail for proselytising Muslims.

The case ended in an acquittal, which the public prosecutor appealed.

However, an appeals court found "no evidence the accused undertook ... to invite the plaintiff to convert to Christianity". The judge defended diversity, quoting a passage in the Qu'ran that says: "We have made you into nations and tribes so you may know one another." The judgment came in November but the media in Morocco only reported it recently.

Meanwhile, a group of Christians in the country has written to the Pope, asking him to press for greater religious freedoms in the country.

The Committee of Moroccan Christians has complained that Christians face discrimination and said the security forces had carried out "abusive arrests".

Christians are the second largest religious group in the country although they make up just 1.1 per cent of the population. Most come from abroad.

The committee wrote that the authorities had "arrested and mistreated people for proclaiming their religion or taking part in prayer services at covert churches, tortured and insulted them and even deprived some of identity documents for having proclaimed their religion or joined prayers in clandestine churches". It also said the authorities had expelled hundreds of foreigners after accusing them of "proselytism".

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Bishops appeal for aid to tackle cyclone devastation

THE CATHOLIC bishops' conferences of Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe have appealed for humanitarian assistance to address the devastation caused by Cyclone Idai, write Rose Gamble, Filipe Aveliz and Ellen Teague.

Strong winds and flooding swept through Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe two weeks ago, ripping apart roads, bridges, houses, schools and health centres and submerging farmland.

More than 750 people are confirmed dead – nearly half of them thought to be children – and 400,000 people have lost their homes.

Mozambique's environment minister, Celso Correia, has said the death toll may rise, as the receding floodwaters are likely to reveal more bodies. Almost 110,000 people are sheltering in makeshift camps and aid workers have warned of the spread of dis-

eases such as cholera and malaria.

The Bishop of Beira, Cláudio Dalla Zuanna, said there was no memory of a disaster of this scale in the region. The Archbishop of Maputo, Francisco Chimoio, who was born in Buzi, one of the worst hit towns, spoke of his anguish and sadness at not being able to reach friends and family. He also praised the countries and NGOs that have shown solidarity. "It is consoling to know that we are not alone in our suffering," he said.

Fr Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, the president of the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar, said on 25 March that "disasters such as Cyclone Idai need not awaken only our sympathy towards humanity but

also our sympathy towards our planet, to God's creation itself".

As a sign of his "feeling of spiritual closeness" to the victims, the Pope has sent \$50,000 (£38,000) each to Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi to assist initial relief.

The appeal of the Disasters Emergency Committee of 14 UK charities has raised more than £18 million. The Government has matched the first £4m donated, pound for pound.

Bishop Declan Lang, chair of the Department of International Affairs at the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, said: "In times of desperate need, we are called to reach out to our sisters and brothers and show we are standing alongside them."

UNITED STATES / Victims' groups welcome new approach to holding Church accountable

Abuse to be tackled using consumer law

MICHAEL SEAN WINTERS

THE ATTORNEY General of West Virginia, Patrick Morrissey, announced his office was taking a novel approach to holding Catholic Church leaders accountable for sexual abuse of minors by clerics: he is charging the diocese of Wheeling-Charleston and its bishops under consumer protection laws.

Morrissey argues the diocese “knowingly employed paedophiles and failed to conduct adequate background checks” on clergy and others who ministered to children whom they were pledged to protect. This amounted to consumer fraud, he alleges.

Victims' advocates praised the

Attorney General's approach. Robert Hoatson, president of the victims' support group Road to Recovery, said: “The culture that we are trying to extricate from this Church – the attorneys general are now helping us to do that in a much more meaningful fashion.”

Last September, the Pope accepted the resignation of West Virginia's Bishop Michael Bransfield and announced Metropolitan Archbishop William Lori would lead an investigation into allegations that Bransfield had improper relations with seminarians and clergy.

Earlier this month, Lori announced he had concluded his initial investigation and for-



Patrick Morrissey

PHOTO: GAGE SKIDMORE

warded the findings to Rome. In addition to the sexual misconduct allegations, Lori said he also investigated charges of financial impropriety.

He barred Bransfield from any

priestly ministry pending the Vatican's review of his findings and its decision about Bransfield's punishment.

The diocese issued a statement objecting to the consumer fraud charges, saying it “strongly and unconditionally rejects the Complaint's assertion that the Diocese is not wholly committed to the protection of children.”

The Attorney General defended the decision, noting that he lacked the criminal jurisdiction that some other states, such as Pennsylvania, permit. The consumer fraud charges will permit him to demand the diocese turn over records to the Attorney General's office that he might otherwise not be able to access.

Michigan rules in favour of LGBT adoption rights

The Attorney General in Michigan reached a court settlement with the American Civil Liberties Union that bars adoption agencies in the state from refusing to serve gay or lesbian couples or individuals, *writes Michael Sean Winters*.

“Discrimination in the provision of foster care case management and adoption services is illegal, no matter the rationale,” said Attorney General Dana Nessel. “Limiting the opportunity for a child to be adopted or fostered by a loving home not only goes against the

state's goal of finding a home for every child, it is a direct violation of the contract every child-placing agency enters into with the state.”

Religious activists contended that the settlement would infringe on their religious liberty and force them to stop serving as a child services agency. Becket Fund senior counsel Lori Windham said: “Thousands of children will be kept from finding the loving homes they deserve. This settlement violates the state law protecting religious adoption agencies.”

Relatedly, the U.S. bishops' conference announced its opposition to the Equality Act, a federal proposal that would extend non-discrimination protections based on both “sexual orientation” and “gender identity.” The bill would affect public policy, from social services to health care to education.

The bishops voiced their objection in a letter sent to all members of Congress signed jointly by Bishop Frank Dewane, chair of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, Archbishop

Joseph Kurtz, chair of the Committee for Religious Liberty, and Bishop James Conley, chair of the Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage.

“As Catholics, we share in [the] work of justice,” the letter stated. “Rather than offering meaningful protections for individuals, however, the Equality Act would impose sweeping regulations to the detriment of society as a whole.... the Act also fails to recognize the difference between the person ... and the actions of a person.”

FRANCE

Pope criticised for refusal to accept Barbarin resignation

POPE FRANCIS' decision to refuse the resignation of Lyon Cardinal Philippe Barbarin after his conviction for covering up clerical sexual abuse cases has prompted criticism and confusion in France, *writes Tom Heneghan*.

The head of the victims' aid group that brought the case against Barbarin said the pontiff was “a traitor, a Judas” and said he thought the pope “would suc-

ceed in killing the Church”. The newspaper *Ouest France* called the decision “legal but not just”.

Barbarin, who admits poor judgement but no criminal responsibility, has appealed a Lyon court's sentence of six months suspended for covering up the repeated abuse of boys scouts by a priest in his diocese.

Pope Francis decided to await the result of the appeal and asked

Barbarin to do what was best for Lyon. Barbarin decided to go to a monastery and leave his vicar general in charge in the interim.

Noting that the Paris prosecutor had asked for the diplomatic immunity of the nuncio to be lifted in an abuse case there, the victims' group *La Parole Libérée* asked the Lyon prosecutor to try that option to have the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) head come testify in the abuse scandal.

The Vatican cited diplomatic immunity last year when refusing to allow CDF head Cardinal Luis Ladaria Ferrer, who had advised Barbarin to discipline the abuser “while avoiding public scandal”, to testify in the Lyon case.

“This case has been very confusing from the beginning,” said Fr Pierre de Charentenay SJ, former editor of the Jesuit monthly *Etudes*. “Barbarin was convicted for not denouncing a priest who himself has not yet been tried.”

Also, Paris Archbishop Michel Aupetit publicly reprimanded a priest for saying in a televised discussion on clerical sexual abuse that children often “spontaneously sought tenderness from an adult”. ■ Fr Jean-Loup Lacroix, parish priest of St Sulpice church, Paris, which was damaged by an arson attack last week, told *Le Point* magazine the blaze was not an anti-religious act but declined to speculate further on its cause.

AUSTRIA

Schönborn wants 'spiritual' approach to abuse crisis

A COMPLETE change of culture in dealing with authority – “especially spiritual authority” – would be the best way to prevent abuse, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn told the press after the Austrian bishops’ conference’s spring plenary, *writes Christa Pongratz-Lippitt*.

Asked if the abuse crisis had “created a momentum for extensive church reform”, Schönborn said he was sceptical about some reforms being called for.

Many local Churches had great hopes in the coming Amazon Synod as they hoped that, due to the drastic shortage of priests in the region, the rules for admission would be expanded. This would not solve the abuse problem, he felt. Even opening the priesthood for women was of secondary importance, as abuse had also occurred in church institutions headed by women, he said.

At the recent Vatican summit on clerical abuse it had become clear “that a change in culture in dealing with spiritual authority is imperative”, Schönborn recalled. This change should develop in the direction of the “open society” envisaged by Austrian philosopher Sir Karl Popper, author of *The Open Society and its Enemies*.

At the end of the press conference, the cardinal announced that he had been diagnosed with prostate cancer. An operation is scheduled for early in May.

THE NETHERLANDS

Eijk rejects plan to sell cathedral

CARDINAL Willem Eijk has rejected plans by the Utrecht parish board to sell his cathedral because of rising costs and falling attendance after Dutch Catholics gathered about 1,800 signatures protesting against any closure, *writes Tom Heneghan*.

The board announced that the Utrecht archbishop refused to let the sixteenth-century Gothic building be sold to the adjoining religious art museum, “especially because of the wider significance of Saint Catherine’s Cathedral for all the Netherlands as metropolitan seat”.

VIEW FROM ROME

Christopher Lamb



WHILE BRITAIN agonises over how to Brexit (or not), the government in Italy – where anti-EU sentiment is on the rise – is turning East. No one in Rome predicts Italexit, but while they may not be happy with Brussels, the eurosceptic government here is picking its battles. Rather than re-negotiating its relationship with the EU, it has decided to do business with China.

During his recent visit to the *bel paese*, President Xi Jinping agreed 29 deals worth €2.5 billion (£2.1 billion), as Italy became the first western country to sign up to China’s Silk Road investment plan. Critics see the “Belt and Road initiative” as a Beijing power grab, and an attempt to become a silent shareholder in countries stretching across Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Latin America and Africa by buying up vast swathes of infrastructure. But the Silk Road is also a network of trade routes linking the east and west which dates back to the first century BC.

Supporters of the Eurasia project, which it is whispered includes some influential figures in the Vatican, point out that China is a world power looking to exert soft power influence and that the silk road of antiquity saw different religions live peacefully alongside one another.

Whatever happens with Brexit, the future of Europe is going to be defined by the shifting of the tectonic plates of power and analysts in the Holy See recognise that the West is going to have to work out a new settlement with the likes of China, India, Japan, and Russia. Hilaire Belloc famously said, “Europe is the faith, and the faith is Europe”. For the first Latin American pope and the increasingly globalised Church, that notion probably looks rather quaint. Finding the right path in this new alignment, says Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, will entail “misunderstandings, fatigue and suffering.”

The Pope and his Secretary of State are facing stiff criticism over the agreement signed last year between the Holy See and Beijing on the appointment of bishops, given the crackdown on religious freedom in China. Critics also point out that despite the agreement and the Vatican’s eagerness for a meeting President Xi didn’t visit the Pope when he was in Rome. The word in Rome is that while the president was personally open to seeing the Pope, divisions within the Politburo meant he declined the offer.

ISLAM IS the other major global concern for Pope Francis, as it is on peaceful relations with the Muslim world as well as with China that so much hinges.

Today, Francis is visiting Morocco, the third of a triptych of visits to Muslim countries that

included Egypt in 2017 and the United Arab Emirates last month. Along with seeking to build diplomatic ties with leading Sunni powers, and encouraging them on a path of religious tolerance, the Pope’s forays into this area helped to foster closer Catholic-Muslim dialogue. While in Abu Dhabi, Francis signed a joint declaration with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, in which they declared that “the pluralism and the diversity of religions ... are willed by God in his wisdom.” Although this raised some eyebrows, Francis insisted it was in line with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, which argues that while the fullness of truth subsists in the Catholic Church, the seeds of truth exist in other religions. It’s fair to say, though, that Francis shifts the emphasis to the latter (while not denying the former) and implicitly passes over the controversial 2000 declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, which described other religions as “gravely deficient”.

A ROW ERUPTED this week with the resignation of Lucetta Scaraffia, the editor of the women’s monthly magazine published by the Vatican newspaper *L’Osservatore Romano*. Scaraffia and her editorial board stepped down en masse, complaining that they had been put “under the direct control of men.”

On the face of it, this looked like yet another example of the all-male clerical caste in the Vatican ridding themselves of troublesome, outspoken women. It was even interpreted as repayment for Scaraffia, one of the few self-declared feminists working inside the Vatican, who last year published a hard-hitting article on the abuse of nuns by priests.

But in the subtle and brutal world of Roman politics, things are not always what they seem, and this row also reflects an internal power struggle. The Vatican’s woeful lack of women in senior positions masks it, but reform is under way to ensure all Vatican communications, including *L’Osservatore Romano*, better articulate the Pope’s reform agenda. Let’s not forget that Scaraffia was a close ally of ex-editor Giovanni Maria Vian – who was dismissed abruptly at the end of last year – and Cardinal Camillo Ruini, the former president of the Italian bishops’ conference. She appeared to share some of Ruini’s culture warrior positions, as when she suggested that same-sex marriage was “a socialist-style deception”. Vian’s successor as editor, Andrea Monda, has stressed that he did not interfere with the magazine’s editorial content, and that it will continue to be published “without clericalism of any kind”. The test of this will be who he chooses to take over from Scaraffia.

NEWS BRIEFING

FROM BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Faith groups have criticised a decision by the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) to adopt a neutral stance on **assisted dying** following a poll of its members. Of the 7,000 doctors who voted in the RCP's online poll, 43 per cent thought the college should oppose a change in the law, 32 per cent wanted the college to support a change and 25 per cent were neutral.

Because no position attained a 60-per-cent majority, the RCP said it would adopt a neutral position, dropping its 13-year opposition to assisted dying.

The Christian Medical Fellowship strongly condemned the change, saying that it was "in reality a vote for change in the law" because it meant that the RCP would no longer publicly oppose the introduction of new legislation for assisted dying.

Speaking on behalf of the Bishops Conference, Bishop John Sherrington said: "We are disappointed at the RCP's dropping their opposition to assisted suicide and moving to a 'neutral' position on the topic, despite a majority voting to oppose any change in the law."



Parishes across the UK have celebrated the first feast day of **St Oscar Romero**, the martyred Salvadoran archbishop who was canonised last year. On Saturday the Archbishop of Southwark, Peter Smith, blessed the Romero Shrine at St George's Cathedral, Southwark, making it an official diocesan shrine.

In Edinburgh, the Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, Leo Cushley (pictured centre), blessed a shrine containing Romero relics at Sacred Heart Church, Lauriston Street.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby,

marked the saint's first feast day, saying in a statement: "Blessed Oscar was a champion of peace and justice. He stood up against oppression. He was consistently on the side of the poor, the underprivileged and the marginalised. In this he emphasised and demonstrated the love of Christ himself."

The Bishop of Salford, John Arnold, has defended the UK's **aid budget**, saying that it is in Britain's best interests to support people suffering the worst effects of war and climate change.

In a letter to *The Guardian*, co-signed by the Bishop of Coventry, Christopher Cocksworth, lead Anglican bishop for foreign affairs in the House of Lords, Bishop Arnold warned against moves to restructure the aid budget, including those proposed last week by the TaxPayers' Alliance.

"In the suffering of men, women and children caught up in conflict, dealing with the worst effects of climate change or leaving their homes in search of a safer future, we see the face of Jesus Christ," they wrote. "We tire of being told what's best for British interests; what is best for British interests is people around the world able to flourish in their own communities and an aid budget focused on that."

Robert Byrne has been installed as the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle. He is the first Oratorian bishop in England in 145 years, and was formerly an auxiliary bishop in Birmingham. He was installed at St Mary's Cathedral on Monday, and in his homily said that he felt honoured and humbled to serve "in this ancient diocese".

At his installation, Bishop Byrne wore St Cuthbert's Ring, a thirteenth-century gold ring with an uncut sapphire left by a pilgrim at St Cuthbert's tomb in Durham Cathedral. It is now kept at Ushaw College.

No action over trans row tweets

Surrey Police has dropped its investigation into a Catholic journalist accused of sending "deliberately nasty and

malicious" tweets about a transgender woman.

Caroline Farrow, a 44-year-old journalist and Catholic commentator, appeared last September on ITV's *Good Morning Britain* along with transgender rights campaigner, Susie Green, to discuss the Girl Guides' policy of not informing parents if a transgender child joins the Guides. Following the programme, Mrs Farrow continued the debate with a series of tweets, which were described by Ms Green as "deliberately nasty and malicious".

Surrey Police said: "A thorough investigation was launched to establish whether any criminal offences had taken place. The original allegation has subsequently been withdrawn and no further action will be taken in relation to this matter."



Exams success

Catholic schools have dominated this year's A-level and GCSE league tables in Northern Ireland. Examination performance lists show that all the top ten schools in the A-level league table were faith schools. Nine of the ten are Catholic. The statistics relate to the 2017-18 academic year for 159 schools.

The top grammar school was **St Louis Grammar School in Ballymena**, a voluntary Catholic school where 95.4 per cent of pupils achieved three or more top grades.

The best-performing non-grammar was St Brigid's College (logo pictured) in Derry, which came third overall with 92.3 per cent of pupils securing three or more top grades. More than two-thirds of St Brigid's pupils are entitled to free school meals.



The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge has defended the Divinity Faculty's decision to rescind its offer of a visiting fellowship to the controversial Canadian academic and author **Professor Jordan Peterson** (pictured).

Professor Stephen J. Toope said in a statement that the decision was made after a photograph emerged of Professor Peterson posing with his arm around a person wearing a t-shirt with the slogan: "I'm a proud Islamophobe."

"The casual endorsement by association of this message was thought to be antithetical to the work of a faculty that prides itself in the advancement of inter-faith understanding," Professor Toope wrote.

"The Faculty of Divinity made a serious error of judgement," Professor Peterson commented on his website. "They handed publicising the rescindment in a way that could hardly have been more narcissistic, self-congratulatory and devious."

Diocese answers abuse claim

The Diocese of Galway has responded to allegations of abuse made against the late **Bishop Eamonn Casey**, stating that no criminal investigations or charges against him were outstanding at the time of his death.

The diocese issued the statement in response to newspaper reports that the late bishop of Galway's niece had alleged that he abused her over a ten-year period.

The former bishop stood down in 1992 after it was revealed that he had fathered a child. He died in March 2017.

Compiled by **Liz Dodd**.

PERSON IN THE NEWS



Boris Johnson MP on Brexit: “It is time for the Prime Minister to channel the spirit of Moses in Exodus, and say to Pharaoh in Brussels – ‘let my people go!’”

DIARMUID MARTIN / Dublin archbishop says light at end of the tunnel ‘is still a long way off’

Ireland could lose dioceses in overhaul of Church structure

SARAH MAC DONALD

ARCHBISHOP Diarmuid Martin of Dublin has called for a reduction in the number of dioceses in the Irish Church and for a radical overhaul in the training of priests.

In an address on “The Church of the Future” at St Michael’s Church of Ireland parish in Limerick last week, the archbishop (inset) outlined his vision for renewal which would include a “reduction and rationalisation of dioceses” and a “revision of the arcane workings of the Irish Episcopal Conference”.

Recalling the Apostolic Visitation to Irish dioceses announced by Pope Benedict XVI in his 2010 “Pastoral Letter to the Catholics of Ireland” in response to the publication of the Murphy and Ryan Reports on clerical abuse, Archbishop Martin said: “It is well known that I was unhappy with many aspects of the visitation and its results.” He said that despite its good intentions, “the visitation



froze the renewal of the Irish Church for some years” and the results were “disappointing.”

A number of dioceses were left vacant for years and some of the ideas of the visitation were put on hold, including the rationalisation of the number of dioceses.

Archbishop Martin said: “We need to take a radical new look at the formation of future priests. A culture of clericalism is hard to eliminate. It did not come out of nowhere and so we have to address its roots in seminary training. There is no way we can put off decisions regarding the future.”

His comments were made as the Irish bishops prepared to draw up a new programme for the formation of priests, under which seminarians spend more time working alongside priests in parishes. The far-reaching changes in the model of formation and the structures of Irish seminaries were first revealed by *The Tablet* in January 2018 in an interview with Professor Michael Mullaney, President of Maynooth.



In Limerick, Archbishop Martin gave a bleak assessment of the situation of the Church in Ireland, describing it as coming out of one of the most difficult moments in its history. “The light at the end of the tunnel is still a long way off,” he acknowledged.

The Irish Church, he said, would have to live with the fruits of its actions and its inaction and with the grief of its past, “which can and should never be forgotten or overlooked.”

While there was “no simple way of wiping the slate of the past clean, just to ease our feelings,” he also stressed that the Church in

Ireland cannot be imprisoned in its past.

Irish culture has drifted from being the culture of an enlarged faith community into a heavily secularised culture. For many, faith no longer plays a major role in their lives and they feel that this in no way compromises their ability to be good, honest and caring people, he said.

He also sounded a note of caution over Catholic education, which despite investment in the structures of school-based religious education and enormous goodwill, was not producing the results that it set out to achieve.

“We have great teachers in our faith schools. The system is also such that teachers who do not share the faith find themselves at times teaching something of which they are not convinced.

“There are fundamental fault-lines within the current structure for Catholic schools that are not being addressed and unattended fault-lines inevitably generate destructive energies,” he warned.

Speaking of the kind of leadership the Catholic Church in Ireland needs in the future, he said the term “synodality” was a current buzzword. Future leadership must represent lay, clerical and religious, women and men, young and old.

“We all agree on this, but nothing seems to happen.” As a result, he stressed, “The alienation of so many women only increases.”

Catholic teaching ‘could become hate crime’, consultation warned

THE CATHOLIC Church in Scotland has warned against legislation that could define expressing the Catholic Church’s position on marriage or sexuality as an attempt to stir up hatred, *writes Ruth Gledhill*.

Responding to a consultation on hate crime legislation in Scotland, the bishops’ conference said in a statement that the fundamental right to freedom of expression as detailed in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights must be upheld. “Suppressing this free-

dom will create divisions and foster grievances across society. There is a climate of heightened sensitivity in the culture and a very real danger that expressing or even holding individual or collective opinions or beliefs will become a hate crime,” the bishops said. “Some might suggest that expressing the Church’s position on marriage or human sexuality could be an attempt to stir up hatred.” The consultation on Lord Bracadale’s recommendations on hate crime legislation in Scotland closed on 24 February.

Campbell to leave St Mary’s after six years as vice-chancellor

PROFESSOR Francis Campbell, the Vice-Chancellor of St Mary’s University, Twickenham, has announced that he is to step down in 2020, *writes Liz Dodd*.

Professor Campbell, who was appointed in 2014, will leave the university to take up the role of Vice-Chancellor at The University of Notre Dame Australia, which has campuses in Sydney and Fremantle, near Perth, in Western Australia.

The Board of Governors at St Mary’s will meet in due course to discuss details for the appoint-

ment of the new Vice-Chancellor.

Professor Campbell thanked the students, staff, governors and wider university community for their support and encouragement.

“St Mary’s is such a special community to be part of and the journey we have undertaken, at a time of significant change and flux in the sector with its challenges and opportunities, has been hugely encouraging. I have no doubt that St Mary’s will continue to develop and grow stronger and to raise its profile at home and abroad,” he said.

'Illiterate' Home Office quotes Jesus in asylum rejection letter

LIZ DODD

THE JESUIT Refugee Service has accused the Home Office of demonstrating a "shocking illiteracy of Christianity" after it rejected an Iranian asylum seeker's claim because he said that Christianity is a peaceful religion.

In its letter of response, posted on Twitter by his caseworker, Nathan Stevens, the Home Office quoted passages from the books of Leviticus and Revelation in an attempt to demonstrate that Christianity is not a religion of peace. It also quoted Jesus, in Matthew 10, saying: "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."

The letter read: "These examples are inconsistent with your claim that you converted to Christianity after discovering it was a 'peaceful' religion, as opposed to Islam which contains violence rage [sic] and revenge."

Sarah Teather, director of the Jesuit Refugee Service in the UK, said: "This is a particularly outrageous example of the reckless and facetious approach of the Home Office to determining life and death asylum cases – they appear willing to distort any aspect of reality in order to turn down a claim. This case demonstrates the shocking illiteracy of

Christianity within the Home Office. But the distortion of logic and reckless approach to asylum seekers' lives is a common feature. At JRS, we routinely encounter cases where asylum has been refused on spurious grounds. Some of these cases require more legal knowledge than this bizarre misquoting of the Bible.

"As this instance gains public attention, we need to remember it reflects a systematic problem and a deeper mindset of disbelief within the Home Office, and is not just an anomaly that can be explained away."

Mr Stevens said that the Home Office subsequently agreed to withdraw their refusal and to reconsider the man's asylum application. He later released details of a second case, in which a Christian woman who fled Iran

fearing execution had her asylum claim rejected because the Home Office considered her belief in Jesus to be "half-hearted". Her refusal letter read: "You affirmed in your AIR [Asylum Interview Record] that Jesus is your saviour, but then claimed that he would not be able to save you from the Iranian regime. It is therefore considered that you have no conviction in your faith and your belief in Jesus is half-hearted."

The woman, who wished to remain anonymous, later told BBC Radio 4 that she believed her interviewer had been laughing at her as he asked "why Jesus didn't help you from the Iranian regime or Iranian authorities".

A Home Office spokesperson said: "This letter is not in accordance with our policy approach to claims based on religious persecution, including conversions to a particular faith. We continue to work closely with key partners, including the APPG [All-Party Parliamentary Group] on International Freedom of Religion and a range of faith groups, to improve our policy guidance and training provided to asylum decision-makers so that we approach claims involving religious conversion in the appropriate way."



BREXIT

Church brings in lawyers to help EU citizens secure right to remain

THE BISHOPS' Conference has advised dioceses in England and Wales to bring immigration lawyers into parishes to advise EU citizens on how to secure settled status in the UK, writes Liz Dodd.

In a letter to the bishops, Paul McAleenan, the lead bishop for migrants and refugees, said "many who have made their homes here and wish to stay will still be facing uncertainty and confusion about what they need to do".

He said that the Church wants to make EU citizens aware of their rights and was continuing to engage with the Home Office and the European Commission to address problems with the Settlement Scheme for those wishing to stay in the UK after Brexit.

He recommended bishops circulate the EU Commission website www.eurights.uk, which lists information days across the country and the services of immigration solicitors who will attend parish sessions free of charge.

Gail Williams, centre manager at Caritas St Joseph's in Hendon, said she used the website to hire a human rights lawyer to lead a two-hour training session on the Settlement Scheme at their information day. The event, publicised in schools and the community, was attended by 40 people.

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The artifice of the deal

JOHN MORRISH

THE WORD “deal” has mesmerised us for months, and that doesn’t seem likely to change. Where did it come from and what does it imply?

A “deal” is an agreement, obviously enough. That’s what it meant in the title of Donald Trump’s 1987 book, *The Art of the Deal*. Over here, the word had a particular pop-cultural moment with the game show *Deal or No Deal?*, hosted by Noel Edmonds from 2005 until 2016. After the Brexit referendum in 2016, journalists and headline writers were irresistibly drawn to that phrase.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* treats “deal” as two different nouns: the first meaning “a portion”, the second meaning “the act of dealing or distributing”. That first noun is said to come from an Old English noun, *dael*. Such “deals” come in all sorts of shapes and sizes: good deals, great deals, bad deals and deals pure and simple. “I have a deal to look after,” complained Samuel Johnson in a letter of 1777. “Big deal” is from the 1930s; used sarcastically, it is from J.D. Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye*, published in 1951.

The “deal” that has paralysed the political class for the last three years is the *OED*’s second noun. It comes from an Old English verb, *daelan*, meaning “to divide”. In its early uses, the verb meant to divide or share land, property or food, becoming more figurative over time.

Later, to “deal [someone] a blow” became a common phrase, but the verb



The ‘deal’ we have in mind when we consider Brexit dates back to the sixteenth century

also found its place in card games. From the 1940s, in the US, to “deal someone in” was to give them a part in an enterprise. To “deal with” something or someone originally meant to engage in conflict with it. Later it meant to have business dealings with it or just to concern oneself with it. This article, for instance, “deals with” the word “deal”. In the second half of the twentieth century, to “deal” (intransitive) meant to sell drugs. Later it became transitive: “he dealt cocaine”.

The “deal” we have in mind when we consider Brexit or the deal-making president dates back to the sixteenth century. The first recorded use is Scottish, and refers to a “carnal deal with another

man’s wife”. Subsequently, “deals” were about the distribution of cards in games. In the nineteenth century, a “deal” became a business transaction, but only in slang, where it carried an element of disapproval. It meant “a transaction of an underhand or questionable nature; a private or secret arrangement in commerce or politics entered into by parties for their mutual benefit”.

That usage was originally from the US, as are the *OED*’s relevant citations, which refer to the making of “deals” by party bosses in the 1880s. It was not picked up on this side of the Atlantic for another half century or so. The “square deal”, the opposite of the “raw deal”, was an expression coined in 1927 by Lady Astor, the first woman to take a seat in Parliament. “Although we have got the vote, we women have a long way to go before we get a positive square deal.”

By this time, though, another idiom had arrived. That was the “new deal”. Starting out in card games, it rapidly became more figurative, and was eagerly taken up by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in a speech of 1932 for a programme of public works.

A quick look at Google’s statistics reveals increasing frequency of the word “deal” and the phrases “Brexit deal” and “Brexit no deal” as search terms since the autumn. They are all currently working hard, especially in Northern Ireland, where an agreement is of more than academic interest.

Glimpses of Eden

JONATHAN TULLOCH

THE MYSTERY lasted three days. It began on a blustery Monday, when something caught my eye as I walked by a lone goat willow. Despite the wind, an early bee was on one of the yellow catkins. It was feeding on the rich nectar and pollen. Pressed deep inside the stamens, I could only see its back end – beautifully fluffy and buttery-golden.

That night, I combed through pictures of the 250 species of British bee, and couldn’t find a match. Tuesday was even windier, but the sun was out, and that afternoon the whole willow was covered in the same bees.



Were they bees? Their front ends, clearly visible as they flew all about me, were decidedly fly-like. Could they be bee-flies or hoverflies, which masquerade as sting-

carrying bees to deter predators? More research that evening; still no solution.

Wednesday saw me hurrying to the same tree. No sun today, yet a few of the mysterious little animals still fed doggedly in the catkins. I watched one land on some horse manure, left by a recently passing pony. There were many more of the insects gathered there. That evening, I cracked the enigma. Yellow dung flies. Photogenic they might be, but as their name reveals, most of their lives are spent on animal droppings: jewels of the midden!

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FARM STREET

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

will take place at Farm Street Church between 2.30pm and 5.30pm on Sunday 7th April.

Priests will be available in the church to hear confessions during this time. Confessions will also be heard before and after each of the regular Sunday Masses.

farmstreet.org.uk
020 7493 7811


JESUIT CHURCH OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
FARM STREET

A Novena for Syria

will be prayed at every Mass at Farm Street Church starting on 7th April, the 4th anniversary of the martyrdom of Fr Frans van der Lugt SJ and ending on the 16th April.

The Novena will be offered for the release of Fr Paolo dall'Oglio SJ. Farm Street Church is home to the Middle East Shrine which is a focus of prayer and solidarity for the region.

farmstreet.org.uk
020 7493 7811


JESUIT CHURCH OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
FARM STREET
EVENTS

Caring for Our Common Home: Integrating theology, ecology and ethics

Thursday 4 April 6.45pm
Rev Dr Martin Poulson SDB
Roehampton University

The Landings Lecture Happy Landings: Accompanying the Return to Faith and Practice

Thursday 11 April 7.00pm
Dr Gemma Simmonds CJ
Margaret Beaufort Institute, Cambridge

Farm St Church Hall, 114 Mount St
London W1K 3AH

Admission free, donations appreciated.

For more information please visit:
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